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# LATENS DEUS

## LA RECONNAISSANCE DU CHRIST DANS LES ÉVANGILES

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PARLANT de la carrière terrestre du Sauveur, Augustin dit: "ainsi apparut-il, un homme d'entre les hommes, Dieu caché."[1] Cette formule saissisante met en relief l'aspect particulier sous lequel le ministère de Jésus se présente dans les évangiles canoniques. Selon les hagiographes, Jésus cherchait à cacher sa nature véritable, ses miracles, sa doctrine, sa présence même, et, pourtant, il ne cessa pas de se manifester. "Il ne voulait pas qu'on le sût, mais il ne put demeurer caché" (Mc. 7, 24). Les pères de l'église, de Justin à Athanase et Chrysostome, insistaient sur ce clair-obscur dans l'image évangélique du Fils de Dieu.[2] Les miracles et les faits de Jésus révélaient depuis le baptême la divinité cachée dans la chair, dit à ce propos Méliton de Sardes.[3] Mais les esprits forts haussaient les épaules. Si Jésus veut ne pas être reconnu et pourtant on le reconnait, c'est donc que sa volonté est impuissante.[4] S'il interdit la divulgation de ses oeuvres merveilleuses et pourtant les miraculés répandent sa renommée, ça montre l'imperfection de sa prescience.[5] Déjà au II-ème s., la polémique juive

[1] August. Sermo CCXCIII, 5 (P.L. XXXVIII, 1337): *et homo apparuit inter homines, latens deus.*

[2] Voir p. ex. Ignat. ad Ephes. 19, 1 et les passages cités *ad l.* dans J. B. Lightfoot, The Apostolic Fathers II, 2; Just. I Apol. 35, 1; Tertull. ad Praxean, 21; Euseb. ad Stephanum 1, 1 (P. G. XXII, 881); Theod. Mopsuhest. P. G. LXVI, 710; Chrysost. Hom. VI in Philipp. (P. G. LXII, 223); Hom. LIII, 2 in Mt. (P. G. LVIII, 528), et souvent ailleurs; August. Tract. XXVIII in Jo. (P. L. XXXV, 1622). Voir aussi les passages cités dans W. Bauer, Das Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der Neutestamentlichen Apokryphen (1909), 142 et 523.

[3] Melito fr. 7 (P. G. V, 1221).

[4] Ps. August. Quest. in vet. et nov. test q. LXXIII (LXVII): *si ergo voluit et non potuit, infirmata voluntas eius videtur.*

[5] August. de cons. evang. IV, 4. Un autre argument (juif) contre la prescience de Jésus est mentionné Chrys. In quatrid. Lazari, 1 (P. G. XLVIII, 780).

posait ce dilemme: ou Jésus avait tenu à rester ignoré, et dans ce cas, pourquoi avait-il été proclamé publiquement le Fils de Dieu par une voix céleste pendant son baptême, ou bien, s'il manifestait sa divinité, pourquoi avait-il été mené au supplice et exécuté? [6]

Des hérétiques, enfin, y trouvaient matière à scandale. Marcion déduit que Jésus savait qu'il n'était pas le Messie attendu des Juifs et le Fils de leur Dieu.[7] L'école d'Antioche, d'où sortit la doctrine nestorienne, affirma, s'appuyant sur les mêmes textes, que les disciples n'avaient pas regardé Jésus comme Christ pendant sa vie terrestre, et l'avaient cru Messie seulement après la Croix.[8]

Les pères cherchaient une réponse adéquate à de telles objections. Certains exégètes, et Origène parmi eux, pensaient que Jésus avait caché sa nature divine pour "tromper le Trompeur," comme le dit Grégoire de Nysse,[9] pour que le Diable ne connût pas l'arrivée du Fils.[10] Mais selon les évangélistes ce sont précisément les démons qui perçoivent et proclament les premiers l'identité véritable du Nazaréen. Aussi, une autre école donna comme raison du secret le souci pédagogique de Jésus. Le Maître se mêlait aux Juifs sans se faire connaître pour ménager les susceptibilités de ce peuple obtus et mécréant. Ainsi, il ne se découvrit qu'à l'approche de la Croix, et entra dans Jérusalem comme Messie.[11]

Maintenue toujours dans l'exégèse traditionelle,[12] cette théorie historique fut detournée à son profit par la critique du XIX-ème s. En postulant que Jésus n'avait pu arriver que peu à peu à se croire le Christ, l'école dite "libérale" comprit la réserve du Maître comme indiquant le progrès non de sa révélation mais de

[6] Orig. c. Cels. II, 72.

[7] Marcion ap. Tertull. adv. Marc. IV, 21: *immo quia non recte senserat, noluit mendacium disseminari.* On trouvera d'autres passages dans A. v. Harnack, Marcion (1921) 129.

[8] Theod. Mopsuh. P. G. LXVI, 707; 712; 720, et les passages cités dans H. Kihn, Theodor von Mopsuestia (1880) 185.

[9] Gregor. Nyss. Catech. 26 (P. G. XLV, 68).

[10] Orig. Hom. VI in Lc. p. 37 (Origenes Werke IX ed. M. Rauer). Cf. Chrys. Hom. LXVI, 1 in Mt. (P. G. LVIII, 627).

[11] Ps. Victor dans Catenae in Novum Testamentum, ed. J. A. Cramer I (1844), 389. Sur Ps. Victor cf. R. Devréesse, dans Dict. de la Bible, Suppl. I, 1177. Cf. p. ex. Athanas. P. G. XXV, 419; Chrys. P. G. LVII, 361; LVIII, 622, etc. Selon Tert. ad Marc, IV, 9, Jésus se cache par humilité.

[12] Voir p. ex. C. J. Cadoux, The Historic Mission of Jesus (1941) 51.

son développement psychologique.[13] Mais dans les évangiles il n'y a pas trace d'une évolution qui se serait accomplie dans la conscience de Jésus. De plus, toute la conception d'une manifestation progressive est en contradiction avec les données des évangiles. Celui qui dès le début se dit le Fils de l'Homme, remet les pêchés ouvertement,[14] et oppose ostensiblement son Moi à la Loi divine,[15] ressemble mal à ce médecin, dont parle Chrysostome,[16] et qui évite tout d'abord d'effrayer le malade.

La critique "radicale" ébranla au XX-ème s. la position "libérale." En reprenant, sans le savoir, semble-t-il, une idée de Théodore de Mopsoueste, les critiques affirment que le Nazaréen n'a été constitué le Messie dans la foi des apôtres qu'après sa mort. Ainsi, la fiction du "secret messianique," qui entoure Jésus, serait inventée pour pouvoir le décrire comme le Christ pendant son ministère.[17] Selon une autre théorie,[18] Marc aurait introduit le "secret messianique" pour expliquer pourquoi Jésus n'avait pas été reconnu comme le Messie par son peuple.[19] Mais ces thèses reposent sur deux prémisses inadmissibles, à savoir que les apôtres partagaient les préoccupations historiques des critiques modernes, et qu'ils tenaient à les exprimer dans les évangiles. Pour eux le refus du peuple élu d'écouter la voix du Messie s'ex-

[13] On trouvera une histoire du problème au XIX-ème et XX-ème s. dans H. J. Ebeling, Das Messiasgeheimnis und die Botschaft des Markus-Evangeliums (1939).

[14] Mc. 2, 1. Cf. Iren. adv. Haer. V, 17, 2 (P. G. VII, 1170) qui remarque que le pardon des péchés manifesta le pouvoir divin de Jésus.

[15] Chrysostome souligne que la tournure ἐγώ employée par Jésus exprimait sa suprême puissance et dut effrayer les Juifs (Hom. XXV, 1 in Mt. P. G. LVIII, 327).

[16] Chrys. in Ps. XLIX, 2 (P. G. LV, 243).

[17] W. Wrede. Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien (1901). Cette théorie, refutée par A. Schweitzer, Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung (1913) 381, est toujours soutenue par de nombreux exégètes. Voir p. ex. Ch. Guignebert, Jésus (1933) 174; A. Loisy, Les Origines du Nouveau Testament (1936) 85; W. Manson, Jesus the Messias (1943), 96, etc.

[18] Voir p. ex. M. Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel (1934) 67; R. H. Lightfoot, History and Interpretation in the Gospels (1934) 67; Alan Richardson, The Miracle-Stories of the Gospels (1942) 102; Fred. C. Grant, The Earliest Gospel (1943) 254.

[19] H. J. Ebeling (voir n. 13) pense que le secret entourant Jésus dans le second évangile sert à faire ressortir le caractère extraordinaire du message évangélique. Sans le savoir l'auteur reprend sous une forme nouvelle la théorie de S. Reimarus que le but de ce cache-cache de Jésus fut d'exciter d'avantage la curiosité des gens. Voir S. Reimarus, Von dem Zwecke Jesu und seiner Junger (1778) 142. Mais cette solution ingénieuse simplement déplace la question: pourquoi donc Marc choisit-il de peindre clair-obscur la carrière de Jésus?

plique plûtot par l'aveuglement providentiel d'Israel: "car le coeur de ce peuple s'est abruti" (Mt. 13, 14).[20]

## I

D'ailleurs, toutes ces hypothèses, la traditionelle aussi bien que la radicale, partent d'une pétition de principe invraisemblable. Elles supposent que toutes les consignes du silence n'ont qu'un seul et le même objet, celui d'empêcher la révélation prématurée du Christ. Mais en réalité, l'idée du secret a une portée si générale qu'il faut à priori attribuer des raisons diverses aux mystères à première vue incohérents qui entourent le Maître. Par exemple, quand Jésus se retire dans le désert avant sa dernière pâque, il cherche simplement à éluder l'arrestation (Jo. 11, 54).[21] Par ailleurs, quand il ne veut pas qu'on sache sa présence dans le pays de Tyr, rien ne nous empêche de penser avec Origène que Jésus se cachait des Pharisiens, ou bien, pour citer une autre explication patristique, qu'il évitait un contact avec les Gentils.[22]

D'autre part, l'inintelligence des disciples, mise en relief par Marc, n'a rien à voir en soi avec le secret touchant la personne du Maître. C'est plutôt un procédé littéraire, souvent employé depuis Platon, pour souligner la profondeur de l'enseignement donné.[23] Ainsi, les Pères n'en étaient aucunement scandalisés, mais trouvaient plutôt naturel que l'entendement des apôtres n'était pas toujours parfait.[24] Notons, en passant, que le même procédé peut servir à une tout autre intention. Si les disciples ne comprennent pas le miracle de multiplication des pains (Mc. 8, 4), ce trait met la réalité du prodige au-dessus de tout soupçon, comme le remarque Chrysostome.[25] Par ailleurs, la doctrine des paraboles aussi que celle de la mort salutaire du Christ, sont données en secret. Il était de style dans la littérature réligieuse, grecque aussi

[20] Voir A. Charue, L'incrédulité des Juifs dans le Nouveau Testament (1929).

[21] Voir Revue de l'Histoire des Religions v. CXII, p. 213.

[22] Orig. ad Mt. 15, 21, p. 60 (Origenes Werke v. XI, ed. E. Klostermann). Cf. Chrys. Hom. LII, 1 in Mt. (P. G. LVIII, 518); Catenae I, 337.

[23] Voir p. ex. Plato, Conviv. 204 b.

[24] Voir p. ex. Chrys. Hom. LXVII, 1 in Mt. (P. G. LVIII, 633); Hieron P. L. XXVI, 131 (*necdum habentes plenissimam fidem*); Catenae, I, 70; 313; 332. Selon Origène, c. Cels. II, 15 reproches adressés aux apôtres dans les évangiles prouvent la véracité des auteurs sacrés.

[25] Chrys. Hom. LIII, 1 in Mt. (P. G. LVIII, 527).

bien que juive, de présenter les derniers arcanes comme une doctrine esotérique.[26] *Omnibus accessibilis, quam vir paucissimis penetrabilis*, dit Augustin à ce sujet.[27]

Les démons qui interpellent Jésus comme "Fils de Dieu" reçoivent l'ordre de se taire. Cette injonction a beaucoup intrigué les exégètes anciens et modernes.[28] Les premiers étaient perplexes parce qu'ils attribuaient aux évangélistes leur propre doctrine christologique; les modernes ont oublié la nature des esprits malins. Il suffit de rappeler la lutte de Jacob avec l'Ange pour saisir le sens de la consigne. Articulant le nom véritable de Jésus, les puissances infernales cherchent à avoir prise sur lui, mais elles sont privées de la parole par l'exorciste divin.[29]

Passons aux miracles. Appartenant au monde surnaturel, ils se produisent, généralement, à l'écart. Comme jadis Elie, Jésus éloigne les témoins avant de faire ressusciter la fille du chef de la synagogue (Mc. 5, 40). Mais à l'époque de Jésus, il ne manquait pas de magiciens qui produisaient des prodiges menteurs. Aussi, certains thaumaturges opéraient-ils ostensiblement pour échapper à tout soupçon de prestidigitation. De même, Jésus accomplit-il en public certains miracles pour confondre les incrédules; par exemple, il guérit le paralytique en présence de tous (Mc. 2, 10).[30]

Mais voici une particularité de la tradition évangélique. On attendait d'un miraculé qu'il répandît la gloire de la divinité qui sauve et qu'il rendît témoignage à la puissance du thaumaturge.[31]

[26] Voir maintenant A. J. Festugière, Rev. Biblique, 1939, 50. Cf. Is. Lévy, La Légende de Pythagore (1927) 308.

[27] August. Epist. CXXXVII, 18. Cf. Catenae I, 162.

[28] Mc. 1, 23; 3, 11; 5, 7. Selon Tertullien (adv. Marc. IV, 8), Jésus voulait se faire reconnaître par les hommes et non par les esprits impurs. Cette explanation est variée par Jérôme ad Mc. 1, 13 (dans D. Morin, Anecdota Mardesolana III, 2, p. 335) et reproduite par le Scoliaste ad Mc. 1, 23 (Catenae) qui cite Act. Ap. 16, 18. On trouvera d'autres explications ap. Orig. Hom. VI, 15 in Lc.; Euseb. Dem. Ev. IX, 6, 434; Theod. Mops. P. G. LXVI, 720; Cyrill. Alex. ad Lc. 4, 41 (P. G. LXXII, 554); Ps. August. Quaest. in vet. et nov. test. LXVI.

[29] Voir A. Fridrichsen, Le Problème du Miracle dans le Christianisme Primitif (1925) 78. Cf. C. Bonner, HTR, 1943, 41.

[30] L'anecdote est imitée dans le fragment d'un évangile trouvé en Egypte. H. I. Bell; T. C. Skeat, Fragment of an Unknown Gospel (1935).

[31] Voir p. ex. l'arétalogie d'Asclépios de Pergame ap. R. Herzog, Sitz. Ber. Preuss. Akad. 1934, 753. Cf. A. D. Nock, Conversion (1933) 83; A. D. Nock dans The Beginnings of Christianity V (1933) 185; J. Bonsirven, Le Judaisme Palestinien I (1934) 184. Cf. mes remarques dans Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire (de l'Université de Bruxelles) VII, 32.

Exorcistes chrétiens se vantaient de leurs succès.[32] Des critiques malveillants représentaient Jésus comme un vantard parce qu'il avait devoilé la guérison de l'hémorroïsse produite à son insu.[33] Mais dans les évangiles, les témoins des prodiges en rendent gloire à Dieu.[34] Dans une seule anecdote exceptionnelle,[35] la tradition montre Jésus ordonnant à un miraculé "d'annoncer tout ce que le Seigneur a fait" pour lui (Mc. 5, 19). Ailleurs, Jésus intervient plutôt pour empêcher la divulgation de ses oeuvres merveilleuses.[36] "Mais plus il le leur défendait, plus ils le publiaient" (Mc. 7, 36; 1, 45; Mt. 9, 30). Chrysostome dit à ce propos: les miraculés "ne purent s'empêcher de devenir hérauts et évangélistes, et quoique invités à cacher l'événement, ils ne le purent pas." [37] Ainsi, c'est précisément la réticence de Jésus qui met en relief son pouvoir théurgique. Comme dit un autre commentateur ancien, Jésus vise à l'humilité mais la grandeur de ses oeuvres crée elle-même sa renommée.[38] Comparez seulement cette pauvre preuve de l'art d'un fameux magicien; l'Empereur lui fit donner un double honoraire après avoir assisté à un prodige operé par Pachrates.[39]

En effet, la tradition évangélique sépare le Sauveur des thaumaturges vulgaires et les pseudo-Messias de l'époque, tout comme les hagiographes évitent intentionellement la phraséologie des religions rivales.[40] Déjà du vivant de Jésus, des adversaires en faisaient un magicien, et la polémique anti-chrétienne répétait sans cesse l'accusation.[41] Mais Jésus refuse à produire un miracle

[32] A. v. Harnack, Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums I⁴ (1924) 157.

[33] Chrys. Hom. XXXI, 1 in Mt. (P. G. LVIII, 371). Cf. Orig. c. Cels. VIII, 39 et 41; Hieron. (supra n. 28), p. 340; Cyrillus, P.G. LXXII, 638 (ad Lc. 8, 45) explique les raisons de Jésus de publier le miracle de l'hémorroisse.

[34] Voir p. ex. Mc. 2, 12; Mt. 15, 31; Lc. 7, 16; 8, 43; 17, 15. A propos de la guérison du possedé de Gérasa (Mc. 5, 19), un commentateur ancien souligne que Jésus attribue la gloire à son Père céleste et pas à lui-même. Tite de Bostra ap. J. Sickenberger, dans Texte und Untersuchungen XXI, 1 (1901) 179.

[35] Sur l'histoire du démoniaque de Gérasa cf. H. Gunkel, Das Märchen im Alten Testament (1921) 87; R. H. Lightfoot (supra n. 18), 88; C. C. Torrey, Our Translated Gospels (1936) 81; Isid. Lévy dans Etudes Horatiennes (1937), 151.

[36] Mc. 1, 43; 5, 43; 7, 36; 8, 26; Mt. 9, 26.

[37] Chrys. Hom. XXXII, 1 in Mt. (P. G. LVII, 377).

[38] Catenae ad Mc. 5, 39. Cf. ib. I, 282 et Tert. adv. Marc. IV, 9.

[39] C. Preisendanz, Papyri Graecae Magicae I, 4, 2445.

[40] A. D. Nock, Journ. Bibl. Lit. 1933, 134.

[41] Mc. 3, 22; Mt. 27, 63; Jo. 7, 12; Just. Dial. 69, 7: Chrys. in Ps. 8 (P. G. LV, 120), etc. Origène souligne le nombre restreint des miracles de Jésus (Orig. c. Cels. II, 48). Il ajoute (ad Jo. 5, 4) que Jésus ne faisait pas beaucoup de miracles pour que la facilité de la guérison ne diminue pas l'admiration.

en signe de sa mission (Mc. 8, 10). Il ne guérit que par miséricorde,[42] pressé par les suppliants[43] de telle manière qu'il lui arrive de se réfugier dans une barque "pour qu'on ne le presse pas" (Mc. 3, 9). Il tenait, dit Chrysostome, à ce qu'on l'implôrat avant de guérir.[44] Ainsi, comme le remarque Origène, sa conduite le rend incommensurable aux magiciens et thaumaturges.[45]

La pluralité des significations du secret explique le fait que l'emploi de ce procédé apparait dans toutes les sources évangéliques. Même Luc, qui en historien, dégage sa narration des traits exotiques, emprunte à une tradition particulière l'épisode des disciples d'Emmaus (Lc. 24, 21). Dans la partie propre à Mathieu, la guérison de deux aveugles se termine par la défense de divulguer le miracle, puis par sa divulgation (Mt. 9, 30). La parole de Jésus sur le célibat est présentée comme un arcane (Mt. 9, 12). Dans le recueil de sentences de Jésus, utilisé par Mathieu et Luc (la source "Q"), nous lisons que les révélations faites aux humbles furent cachées aux savants (Mt. 11, 25=Lc. 10, 21).[46] Selon la même source, Jésus échappe à la question de Jean-Baptiste touchant sa qualité, mais le réfère à ses prodiges qui réalisent la prophétie messianique d'Isaie (Mt. 11, 2=Lc. 7, 18). La doctrine de Jésus est esotérique dans le quatrième évangile, et le mystère couvre son enseignement dans certains passages des Logia et des récits non-canoniques.[47]

Pourtant, les indices touchant au secret restent plus ou moins accidentels et isolés dans la tradition. Comme celle-ci s'est formée par la collection et le choix de témoignages épars et individuels, il est naturel que certains narrateurs aient omis ou contredit l'idée du secret. Par exemple, la guérison des sourds se produit en cachette selon une version (Mc. 7, 31), tandis que les récits parallèles soulignent que le miracle fut operé en présence de tous

[42] Mc. 1, 41; 2, 5; 5, 34; 6, 34; 7, 29; 8, 2; 10, 51.

[43] Cf. Mc. 1, 33; 2, 2; 3, 20; 4, 1; 6, 31; 6, 55; 7, 24; 8, 1; 9, 25; 10, 1.

[44] Chrys. Hom. XXXII, 1 in Mt. Cf. Hom. XXXVI, 1 (P. G. LVIII, 378; 413; 497).

[45] Orig. c. Cels. I, 68. Cf. Catenae I, 71. Origène remarque ailleurs que comme un magnet la foi des miraculés attire le prodige (Orig. ad Mt. 13, 58, p. 25, ed. E. Klostermann).

[46] Voir sur ce passage T. Arvedson, Das Mysterium Christi, Diss. Uppsala, 1937.

[47] Voir p. ex. P. Oxyrch. IV, 655; passages cités dans E. Preuschen, Antilegomena[2] (1905) p. 28, No. 16 et 27, No. 9; la finale apocryphe de Marc (Mc. 16, 14); un autre texte de la même finale dans le Ms. W, etc.

(Mt. 9, 32; 12, 22; Lc. 11, 14). Même dissension au sujet de la guérison des aveugles (Mt. 9, 27; Mc. 10, 46). L'affaire du possedé de Gérasa est publique, et Jésus ordonne même au miraculé d'annoncer partout la guérison (Mc. 5, 1).[48] Mais un doublet du même épisode ne contient pas cette consigne (Mt. 8, 28).

Ce sont les évangélistes qui par leur choix et arrangement des récits isolés accentuent la notion du secret, conformément à leurs propres idées sur le ministère de Jésus. Ainsi, dans le quatrième évangile, tous les miracles de Jésus, du changement de l'eau en vin à Cana jusqu'à la résurrection de Lazare, se produisent dans le public. Mais l'enseignement de Jésus reste inintelligible aux Juifs, voire à ses disciples, habitués comme ils le sont à penser en termes temporels. De même Mathieu comme Luc comprend et retient l'idée du secret doctrinal. Ils sont d'accord avec Marc qu'il n'était donné qu'aux disciples de connaître les arcans cachés depuis la création (Mt. 13, 35=Lc. 8, 8), et ne s'étonnent nullement que la doctrine du Messie souffrant reste un scandale aux apôtres, qui ne la saisissent pas encore le jour de l'ascension (Act. Ap. 1, 6). Etant Juifs, ils s'imaginaient que Jésus devait délivrer Israel en Messie politique (Lc. 24, 21). Et ayant cité la réponse indirecte de Jésus à la question s'il était le Messie attendu, Mathieu (11, 15) finit par un avertissement qui met en relief ce mélange de clarté et de mystère: "Que celui qui a des oreilles entende." Comme Clément d'Alexandrie le remarque à propos de ce passage: l'oreille de l'âme c'est la foi.[49]

## II

Mais c'est seulement dans le second évangile que la consigne du secret est appliquée systématiquement. Ici, tous les mystères touchant Jésus reçoivent une signification christologique, et ce secret messianique conditionne la trame du récit. Et comme Mathieu et Luc dépendent de Marc, quant à l'économie du Message, la conception de Marc laisse une empreinte particulière sur tous les trois évangiles synoptiques.

[48] Cette consigne qui semble si énigmatique aux commentateurs modernes (voir p. ex. Lightfoot, cité n. 35) est expliquée parfaitement par Origène ad Lc. 8, 39, p. 238, ed. M. Rauer.

[49] Clem. Alex. Strom. V, 1, 2, 1. Cf. Tertull. adv. Marc. IV, 25.

Selon Marc, ce sont les démons qui reconnaissent en Jésus le Christ dès le début, mais chaque fois ils reçoivent l'ordre de se taire: [50] situation qu'on ne trouve pas en dehors de la tradition marcienne. Le secret entourant les miracles de Jésus ne figure que dans le matériel choisi par Marc.[51] De plus, quatre fois, selon Marc, Jésus enjoint au miraculé de tenir la guérison secrète (Mc. 1, 44; 5, 43; 7, 36; 8, 23). Telle consigne n'apparaît ailleurs que dans l'épisode de deux aveugles (Mt. 9, 30). Dans le cas où la présence de la foule fait partie intégrante du récit, Marc tient à protéger l'incognito du thaumaturge divin. Selon Mathieu, quand la foule voit Jésus guérir les muets et les aveugles, elle entrevoit qu'il est le "Fils de David" (Mt. 12, 23). Selon Marc (7, 37), la foule est seulement pleine d'admiration. Les miracles accomplis contre les lois de la nature (comme la multiplication des pains, par exemple) n'ont dans le second évangile d'autres témoins que les apôtres.[52] Mais Marc ajoute que ceux-ci ne comprirent pas la signification du prodige (Mc. 4, 41; 6, 52; 8, 17). De même, Marc met en relief que le Maître donnait son enseignement "en particulier" (Mc. 4, 34; 6, 31; 9, 28; 13, 3), et l'exégèse ancienne a noté cette opposition des disciples aux profanes dans la narration évangélique.[53]

Selon la tradition primitive, la leçon donnée en parabole devait servir de règle de vie (Mt. 7, 24=Lc. 6, 47), interprétation que Marc semble avoir connue (Mc. 4, 33). Mais lui-même insiste sur le caractère esotérique de la prédication en paraboles, qui est

[50] Voir supra n. 28.

[51] Les guérisons relatées dans la source Q sont: Mt. 8, 5 (Lc. 7, 1) et Mt. 12, 22 (Lc. 11, 44). Deux prodiges sont particuliers à Mathieu (9, 32; 17, 27) et cinq à Luc (5, 7; 7, 11; 13, 10; 14, 1; 17, 11).

[52] Mc. 4, 35; 6, 30; 6, 45; 8, 1. Les tournures Mc. 6, 50 ("ils voyaient tous" Jésus marchant sur les flots) et Mt. 8, 27 ("les hommes" furent stupefiés par le prodige) montrent que Marc a arrangé la tradition conformément à l'idée du "secret messianique." On notera, d'ailleurs, que tous les prodiges surnaturels racontés dans les évangiles synoptiques viennent de Marc, sauf l'épisode de la pêche miraculeuse (Lc. 5, 7), dont une autre rédaction est donnée Jo. 21, 1. Il faut observer, d'autre part, que les Anciens distinguaient entre guérisons miraculeuses et les prodiges operés en rupture de l'ordre naturel. Origène souligne que les résurrections sont très rares dans les Evangiles (Orig. c. Cels. II, 48). Sur Jésus marchant sur les eaux cf. Euseb. Dem. Evang. IX, 12; Chrysost. Hom. L (LI) in Mt. (P. G. LVIII, 506). Jérôme (P. L. XXVI, 104) suggère une explanation rationaliste de l'apaisement des vents par Jésus (*quae post nimias procellas interdum et casu fieri solet*). Sur les thèmes folkloriques dans l'invention des prodiges cf. H. J. Rose, HTR. 1938, 134.

[53] Orig. ad Mt. 14, 22; p. 39, ed. E. Klostermann.

donnée pour que ceux du dehors l'écoutent mais ne l'entendent pas (Mc. 4, 12). Cette interprétation, reproduite par Mathieu (13, 13) et Luc (8, 10) ne manqua pas d'embarrasser les pères de l'église aussi bien que les commentateurs modernes. Mais si le Maître ne dévoile sa doctrine qu'aux disciples (Mc. 4, 11; 4, 34), ceux-ci sont censés incapables de le comprendre (Mc. 4, 13; 7, 18; 8, 17; 9, 5; 9, 17; 10, 23; 10, 38; 14, 7).

Jésus est méconnu dans le second évangile parce qu'il cache sa qualité messianique et divine. Marc dit expressément que Jésus faisait taire les démons "parce qu'ils le connaissaient" (Mc. 1, 34), et ajoute que Jésus leur ordonnait "de ne pas le faire connaître" (Mc. 3, 11). De même, tandis que les exorcismes s'opèrent en public (les cas d'expulsion des esprits impurs était fréquents à cette époque),[54] les miracles de guérison sont entourés de secret [55] parce qu'ils étaient (selon Isa. 35, 1) des signes annonçant la venue du Messie. Par contre, selon la source Q, Jésus cita ces miracles pour prouver sa qualification messianique (Mt. 11, 2 = Lc. 7, 18). De même, la tradition affirmait que Jésus avait donné aux Douze le don de guérir toute infirmité (Mt. 10, 1 = Lc. 9, 1), pouvoir qu'ils exercent généreusement dans les Actes des Apôtres. Marc. connaît cette tradition (Mc. 6, 13), mais il arrange les choses. Selon lui, Jésus ne donne aux apôtres que le pouvoir de chasser les démons (Mc. 3, 15). Ce travail rédactionnel de Marc s'étend même au titre donné à Jésus. Selon la source Q, Jésus était appelé souvent "seigneur" (Κύριε) par ses contemporains.[56] Mais comme cette formule de politesse [57] était aussi un qualificatif messianique,[58] Marc la replace par le titre usuel des sages de la Synagogue: "Maître." [59] Ainsi, tandis que dès le début de la prédication, la renommée de Jésus se répand de toutes parts, et qu'on amène vers lui tous les incurables et les possédés,[60] sa nature

[54] Cf. Act. Apost. 19, 13. Sur l'emploi par Jésus des formules traditionnelles d'exorcisme cf. A. Dupont-Sommer, Revue d'Assyrologie, 1942–1944, 59.

[55] La guérison operée le jour du sabbat (Mc. 3, 1) et celle du paralytique de Capharnaum (Mc. 2, 1), dont un doublet est préservé Jo. 5, 2 (cf. E. R. Goodenough, Journ. Bibl. Stud. 1945, 155) sont faites en public parce que les miracles en question donnaient l'occasion d'attaquer les Pharisiens y présents.

[56] Voir p. ex. Mt. 7, 21 (Lc. 6, 46); 8, 2 (Lc. 5, 12).

[57] L. Robert, Rev. Archéol. 1936, I, 235.

[58] Cf. Mc. 12, 35.

[59] Cf. p. ex. Mc. 4, 39 avec Mt. 8, 25.

[60] Mc. 1, 28; 1, 32; 1, 45; 3, 7; 5, 21.

véritable reste constamment cachée. Cette antinomie étonne l'évangéliste lui-même, et pour l'expliquer, Marc répète que le coeur des apôtres était endurci (Mc. 6, 52; 8, 17).

En effet, pour soucieux qu'il soit de s'effacer derrière son message, aucun prophète, si humble et si prudent qu'il soit par ailleurs, ne peut ne pas annoncer l'autorité qu'il s'attribue. Mais les Juifs demandent vainement à Jésus par quelle autorité agit-il (Mc. 11, 27). Comme l'observe Chrysostome, Jésus n'enseigne nulle part sa divinité clairement, mais il se sert des autres, amis et ennemis, pour la proclamer.[61]

## III

Pour comprendre l'énigme, observons que le voile se déchire sur le chemin de Cesarée de Philippe et se lève au dernier jour à Jérusalem. Pendant son ministère galiléen, Jésus mène les Douze, à l'aide de prodiges,[62] à un sentiment plus pénétrant de sa nature.[63] Voici, par exemple, l'épisode où s'étant éveillé, le Maître commande aux vents qui allaient faire chavirer sa barque (Mc. 4, 35). Le sommeil apparent de Jésus, dit Chrysostome, indiquait l'homme, "mais les flots apaisés révélèrent Dieu." [64] Et comme les apôtres ne saisissaient pas assez la portée des prodiges dont ils étaient témoins, Jésus leur rappela ses miracles, leur reprochant: "vous ne comprenez pas encore" (Mc. 8, 22). Ainsi, leur yeux s'ouvrirent. Sur le chemin de Césarée de Philippe, le Maître demande ce qu'ils pensent de lui. Et Pierre de répondre: "Tu es le Messie" (Mc. 8, 30).

Selon la terminologie antique cette confession messianique est un *anagnorismos*, ce passage de l'ignorance à la connaissance qui constitue le noeud de la narration et détermine, selon Aristote, l'agencement du récit. Cette interprétation de la scène à Césarée de Philippe n'est nullement nouvelle ou arbitraire. Les pères de l'église parlent constamment de l'*agnitio Christi* par ses disciples, c'est à dire de la reconnaissance en Jésus du Messie annoncé et

[61] Chrys. Hom. XXIX in Mt. (P. G. LVII, 359). Cf. Orig. c. Cels. I, 48.

[62] Sur le rapport entre l'enseignement et les miracles de Jésus voir Chrysost. Hom. XXV, 1 in Mt. (P. G. LVII, 328).

[63] Chrysost. Hom. L, 2 in Mt. (P. G. LVIII, 506).

[64] Chrysost. Hom. XXVIII, 1 in Mt. (P. G. LVIII, 352).

décrit par les oracles de l'Ancien Testament. Nous lisons, par exemple, dans le traité d'Irénée cette démonstration: *Pater . . . Filii sui dat agnitionem . . . Nathanael . . . cognovit Israelites suum regem . . . Peter cognovit Christum Filium Dei vivi.*[65]

Ceci admis, l'ordonnance de la narration de Marc devient intelligible. L'idée de l'*anagnorismos* exige logiquement qu'avant la reconnaissance le héros reste inconnu.[66] Nathanael qui d'abord n'accepte pas la foi du Christ, reconnait à la première rencontre en rabbi de Nazareth le Fils de Dieu et le roi d'Israel (Jo. 1, 49). Mais Pierre et les apôtres tardent à reconnaître le Christ. Donc, le développement du récit marcien apporte un dévoilement partiel du héros, mais ses manifestations demeurent réticentes ou incomprises jusqu'à Césarée de Philippe. L'exemple classique de cette technique qui est inévitable dans chaque récit de reconnaissance se présente dans l'Odyssée. Arrivé en travesti à Ithaque, Ulysse se fait reconnaître à Télémaque, mais il lui interdit de le divulger. La vieille nourrice le reconnait, mais il lui défend de faire connaître son retour. Et les dieux, qui sont dans le jeu, détournent, pendant cette reconnaissance prématurée, l'attention de Pénélope, qui est présente à la scène. Ailleurs, les allusions au retour du héros restent incomprises. Par deux fois Eumée reste incrédule quand Ulysse travesti lui promet l'arrivée prochaine de son maître. En vain, un voyant annonce qu'Ulysse se trouve déjà sur le sol natal; les prétendants refusent de le croire.

De la même manière, par le fait même qu'il avait placé la reconnaissance du Christ par les apôtres à la fin de son ministère en Galilée, Marc fut amené, *volens nolens*, à introduire le thème du secret messianique dans sa narration, en obéissance au principe logique de non-contradiction.[67]

[65] Iren. Haer. III, 11, 6. Cf. Tertull. adv. Prax. 21: *Petrus agnoverat dei Filium Christum.* Cf. Tert. adv. Marc. III, 2; IV, 7; IV, 20; V, 20; Clem. Alex. Strom. VI, 15, 132, 4; Orig. in Mt. 16, 13; p. 82, ed. E. Klostermann; Ambrosius, Expos. in Lucam 4 (P. L. XVI, 825). Voir déjà Jo. 6, 69.

[66] Voir p. ex. Schol. ad Soph. Oed. Rex, 354: les allusions de Tirésias touchant l'identité d'Oedipe ne sont pas comprises parce que si le devin avait trouvé la confiance déjà au début, "tout le reste du drame serait sans portée." Cf. Schol. ad Odyss. I, 328 et IV, 796.

[67] Voir mon étude "Jean-Baptiste au désert" (Byzantion XVI, 1942–43, 1).

## IV

Dès l'*anagnorismos*, Jésus s'ouvre devant les disciples, se nomme le Christ (Mc. 9, 41), s'identifie avec le Messie attendu (Mc. 9, 12). Il explique aux apôtres le mystère de rédemption (Mc. 9, 9; 9, 31; 10, 32). Si les Douze ne saisissent pas encore l'idée de la mort salutaire du Messie, ils ne doutent plus de l'identité du Maître, mais disputent des préseances auprès de lui dans le royaume de Dieu (Mc. 9, 33; 10, 45). La voix céleste qui n'a parlé qu'à Jésus seul pendant le baptême (Mc. 1, 11), le sacre maintenant le Fils de Dieu devant Pierre, Jacques et Jean (Mc. 9, 7).

Mais cette reconnaissance du Messie demeure elle-même un secret pour les non-initiés. Reconnu comme Christ, Jésus enjoignt aux disciples "de ne parler de lui à personne" (Mc. 8, 30). Au peuple, dans son itinéraire vers Jérusalem, Jésus ne déclare pas sa qualité messianique, bien qu'il la laisse entrevoir. Il se nomme le Fils du Père céleste devant la foule (Mc. 8, 34). On fait de guérisons en son nom (Mc. 9, 38); on lui amène des enfants pour qu'il les touche (Mc. 10, 13). Sur la route de Jérusalem, l'aveugle de Jéricho, qui était plus éclairé, comme dit Tertullien,[68] que ceux qui voyaient clair, appela Jésus "Fils de David," et le Maître ne lui imposa pas silence (Mc. 10, 48).[69] Tout cela prépare le lecteur aux cris de "Hosanna," qui vont accompagner l'entrée messianique à Jérusalem (Mc. 12, 8).

Pourquoi Jésus cache-t-il sa qualité par devant le peuple qui, pour parler comme Chrysostome, ne fut témoin de ses oeuvres que de manière intermittente et "pour ainsi dire par hasard." [70] La réponse traditionelle que le temps n'était pas encore venu de se manifester,[71] déplace simplement la même question: pourquoi? Ce secret a la même fonction que le secret de Jésus devant les disciples avant Césarée de Philippe, celle de retarder la reconnaissance. Pourquoi ce retardement? Un exemple pris intentionellement dans un tout autre genre littéraire va le montrer. En

[68] Tert. adv. Marc. IV, 36. La formule pointue est reprise par Chrysostome Hom. LXVI, 1 in Mt. (P. G. LVIII, 625).

[69] Certes, la foule réprimande l'aveugle, mais ce trait sert à souligner l'ardeur de sa foi, comme le note Chrysostome l.c.

[70] Chrys. Hom. XVI, 2 in Mt. (P. G. LVII, 240).

[71] Voir p. ex. Chrys. Hom. XLIX, 1 in Mt. (P. G. LVIII, 497).

effet, les procédés techniques de la narration sont indépendants de la dignité du sujet.

Plusieurs contes populaires développent le thème de l'épouse-fée qui se déguise sous une forme animale. Ayant appris le secret, le mari le garde, et la fée peut lui rendre des services au cours d'épreuves de toute sorte. Mais dans une autre branche de la même famille de contes, l'enveloppe animale de la fée est détruite non à la fin, mais dans la première partie du récit, et découvre à tout le monde, presque dès le début, la beauté de la femme. Ce déplacement de l'*anagnorismos* produit immédiatement un retournement du thème: par la convoitise qu'elle excite maintenant, l'épouse attire de plus grands dangers sur le mari.[72]

La leçon de cette analogie littéraire est claire. Si les disciples avaient prêché l'évangile de Jésus-Christ de suite après l'*anagnorismos* à Césarée de Philippe, toute l'orientation de l'histoire du Nazaréen serait changée. Ecoutons à ce sujet l'opinion de Clément d'Alexandrie. Jésus défend de faire connaître sa divinité afin que les ennemis ne s'abstiennent de porter la main sur lui. La Mort elle-même n'aurait pas touché le Seigneur pour ne pas tenter l'impossible, et ainsi "l'incarnation serait devenu sans effet." [73] Donc, Jésus se laisse entrevoir partout et à tous mais ne découvre sa gloire qu'aux Douze. Qu'on lise la parabole des vignerons (Mc. 12, 1) ou que Jésus proclame: quiconque me reçoit, reçoit celui qui m'a envoyé (Mc. 9, 37), le sens profond est connu aux disciples (et au lecteur), mais il reste énigmatique aux Juifs. Jésus entre dans Jérusalem en Messie, mais, ayant chassé les vendeurs du Temple, il se refuse toujours à dire aux Juifs par quelle autorité il agit (Mc. 11, 27). On dirait qu'il leur laisse le soin de le reconnaître spontanément, à la manière de la confession de Pierre. C'est seulement la veille de sa mort, répondant à l'adjuration du Grand-Prêtre, qui lui demande s'il est le Messie, que Jésus se

[72] E. Cosquin, Les Contes Indiens et l'Occident (1922) 315.

[73] Clem. Alex. Excerpta ex Theodoto, 5 (p. 42 ed. R. P. Casey; P. G. IX, 682). Ici, comme souvent dans ses Extraits, Clément ne cite pas l'auteur gnostique, mais présente ses propres remarques. Cf. Casey, o.c. 29; E. de Faye, Gnostiques et Gnosticisme² (1925), 259. On retrouve la même explication chez Chrysostome, Hom. LIV, 3 in Mt. (P. G. LVIII, 535), P. G. LVII, 358, etc.; chez Cyrille d'Alexandrie (p. ex. ad Lc. 9, 21; P. G. LXXII, 649). Cf. August. de pecc. merit. II, 29, 48 (P. L. XLIV, 180) sur la nature humaine du Christ: *ut ad mortem videatur etiam senescendo illa caro pervenire potuisse, nisi juvenis fuit occisus.*

découvre devant son peuple: "Je le suis." Mais les Juifs ne voient dans cette confession que de l'arrogance.[74] Et "tous le condamnèrent comme ayant merité la mort" (Mc. 14, 64). C'est cet *anagnorismos* final qui crée le secret messianique par rapport aux gens du dehors dans toute la carrière publique de Jésus.

## V

L'économie du message évangélique dans Marc ne peut pas venir de la tradition orale de la première communauté car elle suppose un arrangement intentionel de toute l'histoire de Jésus. Pourquoi donc Marc a-t-il groupé les récits touchant Jésus suivant le schema de deux *anagnorismoi?* La tradition qui remonte jusqu'au début du II-ème s.,[75] affirme que son évangile représente la catéchèse de Pierre. En tout cas, Marc connaît et accepte la tradition, fixée avant lui, qu'à Césarée de Philippe, les prodiges surnaturels leur ouvrant les yeux,[76] les Douze, suivant Pierre, reconnurent en Jésus le Messie promis et attendu.[77] Cependant Marc sait que Jésus était le Fils de Dieu et que dès le baptême il se manifesta en paroles et en oeuvres. Ainsi, le retardement de la reconnaissance ne parut intelligible à Marc que moyennant l'hypothèse que la mystère voulu par le Maître le couvrait jusqu'au jour de Césarée de Philippe. D'autre part, le récit de la Passion était sûrement fixé avant Marc.[78] Il y trouva la déclaration messianique de Jésus devant le Grand-Prêtre, la revendication qui amène la crucifixion du "Roi des Juifs." Marc en déduit logiquement que Jésus voilait son identité aux Juifs avant la séance du Sanhédrin. C'est conformément à ces points fixés de l'histoire de Jésus que Marc arrangea et comprit les données de la tradition sur l'enseignement ésotérique, le silence imposé aux démons et aux miraculés, la réticence du Maître. Il cherchait à s'expliquer et à rendre compréhensible à ses lecteurs l'enchaînement des faits qu'il allait raconter.

[74] Sur ce sens du mot *βλασφημεῖν* voir Revue de l'hist. des relig. CXII, 177.

[75] Euseb. Hist. Eccl., III, 39, 15.

[76] Tert. adv. Marc. IV, 21.

[77] Cf. C. H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching (1937) 104 et, pour les rapports entre la tradition marcienne et celle donnée dans le quatrième évangile, cf. E. R. Goodenough, Journ. Bibl. Liter. 1945, 156.

[78] Voir maintenant Fr. C. Grant, The Earliest Gospel (1943), 57.

Sous la même contrainte, logique et littéraire, Luc introduisit dans l'évangile de l'enfance le thème de la vie cachée.[79] Selon la narration de Marc, que Luc suit ici, Jésus fut proclamé le Fils de Dieu pendant son baptême par Jean-Baptiste. Mais Luc, en suivant d'autres traditions, raconte que Jésus fut consacré dès sa conception divine. Pour résoudre cette antilogie, l'auteur sacré conjecture que la nativité miraculeuse du Sauveur (ainsi que celle du Précurseur) restèrent ignorées du monde jusqu'au terme de manifestation. Mais comme il est impossible de relater paroles et oeuvres du héros sans faire entrevoir son identité, Luc dans la préhistoire de l'évangile, Marc dans son évangile, présentent le héros en clair-obscur avant la reconnaissance. Les péripéties qui précèdent et préparent la reconnaissance n'ont d'intérêt pour le lecteur que si les personnages ne se connaissent pas, mais lui les connaît.[80] La première ligne du livre de Marc n'annonce-t-elle pas que Jésus est le Messie? Ainsi, le lecteur déchiffre facilement les signes et les paroles qui restent obscurs aux Juifs, voire aux apôtres, avant la reconnaissance du Christ.

Marc put suivre son idée préconçue parce que son information touchant Jésus était restreinte (rapellons que selon la tradition [81] il reproduit simplement la catéchèse de l'apôtre Pierre), et pour cette raison ne contenait que peu de péricopes en contradiction avec l'agencement de deux reconnaissances. Quant aux autres évangélistes, ils disposaient d'un matériel beaucoup plus riche et, pour cette raison, plus divers et contradictoire. Donc, Mathieu et Luc, suivant le plan général du second évangile, détruisent sans y penser l'enchaînement des *anagnorismoi* par le simple fait qu'ils y insèrent des récits discordants. Par exemple, selon Mathieu (14, 33), l'apparition de Jésus marchant sur les flots provoque déjà une déclaration messianique des apôtres, ce qui rend inutile la confession de Pierre que l'auteur relate ensuite (Mt. 16, 15) d'après Marc. Ainsi, en adoptant l'idée du secret doctrinal,

[79] Voir l'étude citée n. 67.

[80] Voir D. Diderot, De la poésie dramatique ch. XI (Oeuvres Complètes VII). Sur cette *praeparatio* cf. les observations des Anciens réunies par P. W. Harsh, Studies in Dramatic "Preparation" in Roman Comedy (1935), 2. Cf. G. E. Duckworth, Foreshadowing and Suspense in the Epics (Diss. Princeton) 1933; N. T. Pratt, Dramatic Suspense in Seneca, (Diss. Princeton) 1939.

[81] Voir les textes dans H. B. Swete, The Gospel according to St. Marc[3] (1912), p. xx.

Mathieu et Luc vont à l'encontre de leur source principale là où Marc empêche Jésus de se manifester. Ils n'attachent pas d'importance au secret qui entoure les miracles. Par exemple, Luc narre d'abord une résurrection opérée dans la rue (Lc. 7, 11), et ensuite, d'après Marc (3, 37), il relate la résurrection de la fille de Jair, faite en secret (Lc. 8, 51). Par révérence pour les apôtres, ou pour d'autres raisons, Mathieu et Luc suppriment plusieurs remarques de Marc soulignant l'inintelligence des disciples.[82] Ne comprenant pas la fonction des déclarations messianiques des démons, Mathieu les omet et Luc les néglige.[83] La consigne de Jésus aux guéris de ne pas le faire connaître est donnée dans Mathieu (12, 17) pour réaliser les paroles d'Isaie sur le Messie humilié. Si Jésus se retire c'est pour des raisons politiques (Mt. 12, 4) ou pour prier (Lc. 5, 16; 6, 12). Ailleurs, les instructions données aux apôtres pour leur mission (Mt. 10, 5) ne sont pas conciliables avec la consigne du secret que Mathieu (16, 20) emprunte à Marc. Cette incohérence embarrassa beaucoup Origène.[84]

Ainsi, répétant d'après Marc, l'*anagnorismos* du Christ par Pierre, les autres évangélistes ôtent à cet épisode son rôle compositionel. Selon Jean (1, 41), dès le commencement les premiers disciples de Jésus l'ont su: "nous avons trouvé le Messie." Selon Mathieu (14, 33), les disciples se prosternèrent devant Jésus après l'apaisement du vent. Selon Luc (5, 8), dès la première rencontre, la pêche miraculeuse fit voir à Simon-Pierre en Jésus le Christ. De même, la déclaration messianique de Jésus devant le Grand-Prêtre (omise dans Jean) n'est que la confirmation de la vérité déjà connue et maintes fois proclamée. Selon Jean, les Juifs savent dès le début, de la bouche du Verbe lui-même que Jésus est le Messie et le Fils de Dieu, mais le font périr, dans leur aveuglement, "parce qu'il se fait Fils de Dieu" (Jo. 19, 17).[85] Selon Luc (4, 17), à Nazareth, avant même qu'il n'appelle les premiers apôtres, Jésus s'affirme à la synagogue comme le Messie attendu (Lc. 4, 16). Selon Mathieu (7, 21), Jésus se déclare le

[82] Cf. p. ex. Mt. 17, 1 et Mc. 9, 10; Lc. 8, 9 et Mc. 4, 13.

[83] Mathieu ne garde que la déclaration du possédé de Gérasa (Mt. 8, 29). Luc conserve deux passages (Lc. 4, 35; 4, 41).

[84] Orig. in Mt. 16, 20, p. 101, ed. E. Klostermann.

[85] Si Jésus échappe à un miraculé (Jo. 5. 13), c'est pour que les Juifs ne puissent pas considérer celui-ci comme un témoin suborné du prodige. Voir Chrysost. c. Anomeos, 12 (P. G. XLVIII, 808).

Fils de Dieu dès le début de son enseignement.[86] Sachant l'incommensurabilité du Sauveur, les évangélistes ne s'étonnent pas que Jésus reste néanmoins méconnu, non écouté. Comme le dit Augustin: *Quid mirum? Verbum Dei nunquam tacet sed non semper auditur.*[87]

## VI

Mais derrière le problème littéraire de l'ordonnance du second évangile, il y a une énigme historique. "Personne ne fait choses en secret, s'il cherche à se mettre en vue" (Jo. 7, 14), et le missionaire qui dissimule sa mission constitue une *contradictio in adjecto*.[88] Aussi, le déguisement d'un prophète précède-t-il toujours sa prédication, et celle-ci s'ouvre par la présentation du Messager. Ainsi, Jean-Baptiste reste dans les déserts "jusqu'au jour de sa présentation à Israel" (Lc. 1, 80).[89] Mais selon Marc, l'*anagnorismos* de Jésus prend place au milieu, et même au terme de son ministère. A cette disposition paradoxale rien ne correspond, que je sache, dans les autres ouvrages également destinés à glorifier un Elu.[90] Certes, le Dionysos des "Bacchantes," auquel Celse a comparé Jésus des évangiles,[91] prend l'aspect de son propre prêtre pour introduire son propre culte à Thèbes, opère des miracles, laisse entrevoir dans ses paroles sa nature divine, et ne se révèle qu'à la fin. Mais Euripide vise à l'effet théâtral.

Pourtant, l'ordre du message dans Marc ne semble paradoxal qu'à ceux qui considèrent son témoignage du seul point de vue de

[86] Déjà les commentateurs anciens ont remarqué que la remarque (rédactionelle) Mt. 7, 28 contredit la théorie ésotérique exprimée Mt. 5, 1. Voir Hesychius, P. G. XCIII, 1404. Cf. G. Bardy, Rev. Bibl. 1933, 226.

[87] August. Sermo LI, 17 (P. L. XXXVIII, 342).

[88] Cf. Celse ap. Orig. c. Cels. II, 70: *τίς δὲ πώποτε πεμφθεὶς ἄγγελος, δέον ἀγγέλειν τὰ κεκελευόμενα, κρύπτεται;*

[89] Voir l'étude citée, n. 67.

[90] Dans la légende de Pythagore, reconstruite par Isid. Lévy (La Légende de Pythagore, 1927, 44), le sage, qui est Apollon incarné, cache sa nature véritable pour ne pas effrayer les mortels, mais Abaris le reconnaît. Pourtant, cette reconnaissance reste sans effet sur l'économie du récit. En effet, Pythagore est regardé dès le début comme un être divin, et Abaris ne trouve que la réponse à la question auquel des Olympiens il faut identifier le thaumaturge. C'est la même situation comme dans Horace Od. I, 12, où le poète reconnaît dans le dieu Auguste l'incarnation de Mercure. De même, quand les dieux apparaissent dans la tragédie grecque, leur divinité est reconnue par le choeur, mais leur identité n'est pas reconnaissable. Voir Denniston ad Eurip. Electr. 1223.

[91] Orig. c. Cels. I, 34.

l'histoire,[92] et Marc n'a pas écrit pour ceux-là. Commençant, comme les missionaires chrétiens,[93] par le récit de baptême, Marc arrête pourtant sa narration au seuil de la Résurrection.[94] Car celle-ci ouvre pour lui le Présent, où Christ se manifeste sans cesse dans l'Eglise. Ainsi, le ministère de Jésus, que l'évangéliste relate, n'est que le "Commencement de la Bonne Nouvelle de Jésus-Christ, le Fils de Dieu" (Mc. 1, 1). Vu dans cette perspective marcienne, l'*anagnorismos* de Jésus trouve dans le second évangile sa place légitime et naturelle. La reconnaissance se produit au terme de la préhistoire de l'Elu et ouvre son entrée dans la gloire. Seulement cette fois c'est la gloire de la Croix.

L'église ancienne a compris parfaitement le sens de la réticence paradoxale du Messie à l'égard du peuple pour le salut duquel il fut envoyé.[95] Après la confession messianique de Pierre, Jésus défend aux apôtres de le faire connaître (Mc. 8, 30), parce qu'il doit d'abord souffrir et ressusciter, dit Origène.[96] "Et il serait vain de prêcher le Christ et de taire la Croix."

C'est sous le signe de la Croix qu'on comprend l'économie paradoxale de la Bonne Nouvelle. Rousseau dit que si ce n'était pour son martyre, "on douterait si Socrate, avec tout son esprit, fut autre chose qu'un sophiste." [97] Aux yeux myopes des anciens, sans la Croix, Jésus aurait eu l'apparence d'un de ces inspirés qui prétendaient être le Messie ou même le Fils de Dieu, et qui étaient nombreux dans l'âge des évangiles.[98] Même ses prodiges ne faisaient pas de Jésus un être exceptionel. Celse le dit,[99] et Luc

[92] Comme les caractèrise Augustin: *illi semper terrena sapientes* (Tract. XXXIX, 11 in Jo. P. L. XXXV, 1681).

[93] Act. Apost. 10, 37.

[94] Cf. R. H. Lightfoot, Locality and Doctrine in the Gospels (1938).

[95] Sur ce paradoxe cf. August. Tract. LIII in Jo. (P. L. XXXV, 1774) et Ps. Justinus, Quaest. ad orthodox. 108 et 140 (P. G. VI, 1356; 1393). Sur l'auteur de ce traité cf. G. Bardy, Rev. Bibl. 1933, 212.

[96] Orig. in Mt. 16, 7, p. 111 ed. E. Klostermann: *inutile autem est ipsum quidem praedicari, crucem autem eius tacere*. Cf. ib. p. 110 et Orig. ad Lc. fr. 25; p. 244, ed. M. Rauer. Cf. Catenae I, 389.

[97] J. J. Rousseau, La Profession de foi du vicaire savoyard (Emile l. IV).

[98] Les fanatiques ne manquent pas, dit Celse, qui prétendent d'être venus d'en haut en qualité de fils de Dieu. Orig. c. Cels. VII, 9.

[99] Orig. C. Cels. I, 68; II, 49. Chrysostome observe que les prodiges des apôtres étaient plus extraordinaires que les miracles de Jésus. Chrysost. in princ. Actor. IV, 7 (P. G. LI, 108). Sur l'insuffisance des miracles comme preuve d'une mission voir Tert. adv. Marc. III, 3. Cf. Gobineau, Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale ch. XI.

le confirme, en narrant les miracles encore plus extraordinaires operés par les apôtres. Même la foi qui meut les montagnes n'est pas exceptionnelle parmi les contemporains de Jésus. Sous le règne de l'Empereur Claude, par exemple, Simon de Gitton en Samarie, se donna comme l'incarnation de Dieu, opéra des prodiges et fut considéré comme un être divin non seulement pas la plupart de ses compatriotes, mais aussi par nombre d'étrangers.[100] C'est sa mort, sa résurrection en accomplissement des prophéties, qui rend Jésus unique, incommensurable. Selon l'économie d'un plan divin, toute sa vie terrestre n'est que la préparation à la Croix.[101] Jésus n'a pas accompli de miracles dans son enfance, dit Chrysostome, pour que l'envie de ses ennemis ne la livrât pas à la Croix plus tôt et avant le temps.[102] Il fallait donc que les puissances du siècle ne reconnussent pas le Christ avant le temps. Nous trouvons cette doctrine dès avant Marc. Paul ne s'en doute pas (I Cor. 2, 8). Il nous dit que subsistant en forme de Dieu, Jésus devint semblable aux hommes et fut reconnu pour homme par ses dehors; il s'est abaissé jusqu'à la mort de la croix (Phil. 2, 5).

Ainsi, comme dans le récit de la Passion,[103] comme dans toute la "Bonne Nouvelle," l'agencement des éléments qui constituent le secret messianique ne s'explique que par le Message de la Croix, ce *Verbum Crucis*, qui est folie aux mécréants, mais vertu de Dieu pour ceux qui croient (I Cor. 1, 18).

[100] Voir maintenant P. Casey dans The Beginnings of Christianity, V (1933) 151.
[101] Act. Ap. 2, 23.
[102] Chrys. Hom. XXI, 1 in Jo. (P.G. LIX, 130). Cf. Euseb. Dem. Ev. IX, 4.
[103] Voir mon étude citée n. 21.

# THE EARLY CHURCH AND WAR

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THE ATTITUDE of the early church toward the problem of participation in warfare has been not a little studied and controverted. The data with regard to participation and the attitude toward it have been assiduously compiled by a series of investigators among whom four may be mentioned for their distinctive and permanent contributions. Adolf Harnack in his Militia Christi [1] pointed out that the early Christians rejected the militia of the world in favor of the militia of Christ. In theory the Church was pacifist until the time of Constantine though in practice some Christians were in the legions. James Moffatt in the course of a fruitful survey [2] called attention to the shift in early Christianity from marital to martial metaphors. Whereas in the Old Testament infidelity was called adultery, in the New Testament and the early church it is described as desertion. Such militant terminology could be used by the early Christians "without the slightest risk of misconception" because their pacifist principles were so well known. C. J. Cadoux in The Early Christian Attitude to War [3] set the entire problem in the broad context of theological and political thinking. His work remains the indispensable point of departure for all subsequent investigation. Leclercq supplied in French translation the recorded acts of the soldier martyrs and the texts of the extant inscriptions which mention Christians in the army.[4]

These valuable studies are agreed in the main with regard to the data, but differ at the point of interpretation. Objectivity is difficult for Christian scholars dealing with this question because the problem is still acute and the practice of the early church is commonly regarded as in some measure normative for present

[1] Tübingen, 1905. (Abbreviation: Harnack MC.)

[2] Article "War" in Hasting's Dictionary of the Apostolic Church II (1918), pp. 646–73. (Abbreviation: DAC.)

[3] London, 1919, subsequently incorporated in The Early Church and the World (Edinburgh, 1925). (Abbreviation: Cadoux EC.)

[4] Article "Militarisme" in Cabrol's Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne II (1933), pp. 1107–81. Cf. I, 294–97. (Abbreviation: DACh.)

practice. The Protestant sectaries in particular have been disposed to regard the first age of Christianity as a Garden of Eden from which the Church subsequently fell. The pacifists have painted Constantine as the serpent who beguiled the Church into tasting of the forbidden fruit of political power and military armament. A recent history of Christianity in relation to war is in fact entitled The Fall of Christianity.[5] The Catholic Church, however, glorifies the early period because of the zeal of the martyrs, not because of the rigorism of the saints. Wherever possible the ethic of the early fathers is brought into line with the views of St. Thomas. Protestants who condone Christian participation in warfare of necessity follow largely the Catholic view. The Methodist, Umphrey Lee, for example in The Historic Church and Modern Pacifism [6] is not far removed from the position of the Catholic John Eppstein in The Catholic Tradition of the Law of Nations.[7] The differences are apparent also in the works listed above. Leclercq, the Catholic, is at pains to describe the idolatrous practices prevalent in the Roman army which would deter Christians from military service on non-pacifist grounds. James Moffatt, the Presbyterian, in the tradition of the Westminster Confession which allows the lawful use of arms, stressed in the early church the ineligibility of many Christians for military service to which only free men were admitted. Harnack, the Lutheran, represented Tertullian the rigorist as an exceptional rather than as a representative figure among the African church of his day. C. J. Cadoux, a Congregationalist and a pacifist, stresses the appeal to love and the aversion to bloodshed in the literature of the first three centuries. The problem lies in the understanding of the motives of the early Christians. The discrepant evaluations of competent investigators warrant a fresh examination.

The evidence with regard to Christians in the army before the time of Constantine and the attitude of the Church to their presence in the ranks calls for a brief review. Substantial agreement prevails as to the facts. A few debated points will be noted. From

[5] G. J. Heering (in Holland, 1928; New York, 1943).
[6] New York, 1943.
[7] Washington, D. C., 1935.

the end of the New Testament period to the decade 170–80 there is no evidence whatever of Christians in the army. The subject of military service obviously was not at that time controverted. The reason may be either that participation was assumed or that abstention was taken for granted. The latter is the more probable. The expansion of Christianity had taken place chiefly among the civilians in the urban centers. Few as yet were converted while in the army. Converts in the ranks had many reasons against volunteering. They were not subject to conscription. As slaves or freedmen many were ineligible. The danger of idolatry was greater than in civilian life. Add to these considerations that the Church in the second century was more rigoristic than in the first. Sexual offenders if penitent were forgiven by the Apostle Paul and recommended for readmission. But in the period, roughly from A.D. 100–220, the Church closed her doors forever upon adulterers. So strict a community is more likely to have withheld its members from a military service comprising in so many ways than to have permitted them to serve without a single reproach or penalty.

The decade 170–80 affords two pieces of evidence pointing in opposite directions. The first is the reproach of Celsus, the pagan critic of Christianity: "If all men were to do the same as you, there would be nothing to prevent the king from being left in utter solitude and desertion and the forces of the empire would fall into the hands of the wildest and most lawless barbarians." [8] Such words are so explicit as to warrant the assumption that Celsus knew of no Christians who would accept military service. The comment of Moffatt must be regarded as distinctly inadequate when he says of Celsus: "It is fairly obvious that he had met Christians who were already holding back from military service." [9] Umphrey Lee's version is a masterpiece of understatement: "Whether there were in the second century those who held that a Christian could not serve in the legions we do not know; but Celsus . . . seems to imply that there were." [10]

Celsus said quite distinctly that there were no Christians who

[8] Cels. VIII, 68–69.
[9] DAC II, 664a.
[10] The Historic Church and Modern Pacifism (New York, 1943), p. 60.

would serve, but as a matter of fact he was mistaken. In the very decade in which he wrote, we have our first testimony of Christians in the army in the so-called Thundering Legion under Marcus Aurelius in the year A.D. 173. From that day forward the evidence as to Christians in the ranks increases. Tertullian in his Apology, written in the year A.D. 197, refuted the charge of misanthropy leveled against the Christians by pointing to their presence in the palace, the senate, the forum, and the *army*.[11] His stern rebuke in the De Corona (A.D. 211) to voluntary enlistment is a witness to the practice which he condemns.[12] During the persecution of Decius in A.D. 250, we have a reference in Cyprian to two soldier martyrs.[13] The number of Christians in the army must have increased during the latter part of the third century because even before the great persecution of A.D. 303–4 Galerius sought to weed the Christians out of his forces.[14] When the storm broke the brethren in the ranks suffered the first shock.[15] A number of soldier Christians died for their faith, not for casting off their weapons.[16] How numerous were the Christians in the army at the commencement of the fourth century we have no means of knowing. Cadoux inferred that no sovereign would readily deprive himself of a tenth or even of a twentieth of his military power.[17]

The inscriptions referring to Christian soldiers offer very little assistance. Leclercq compiled a list of 176, chiefly from Latin sources. He pointed out that these figures were minimal because the sources had not been fully exploited and because many Christians did not see fit to record any profession. A more serious difficulty for the present purpose is that the inscriptions in most instances cannot be dated with sufficient precision to assign them with confidence to the pre-Constantinian period. Out of his total only six [18] belong incontestably to the age of persecution; two to the second century, and four to the third. To this number Cadoux

[11] Apologeticus XXXVII, cf. XLII, 5 (Abbreviation: Apol).
[12] De Corona Militis XI (Abbreviation: Cor).
[13] Epistolae XXXIX (XXXIII), 3.
[14] Eusebius, Historia Ecclesiastica VIII, app. (Abbreviation: HE).
[15] Ibid., VIII, 1, 8.
[16] Harnack MC, pp. 117–21.
[17] Cadoux EC, pp. 580.
[18] Nos. 12, 21, 22, 24, 29, 47.

added another couple, making a total of eight.[19] These inscriptions do, however, witness to something more than the mere existence of eight Christian soldiers. The inscriptions are epitaphs and as such prove that the Christian communities where these men were buried did not prohibit the recording of the military profession upon their tombs.

Our data, scanty as it is, permits of more geographical classification than has hitherto been attempted. The results indicate that pacifism best flourished within the interior of the *Pax Romana*, and was less prevalent in the frontier provinces menaced by the barbarians. The section most disinclined to military service appears to have been the Hellenistic East. Such may be inferred in a general way from the testimony of Celsus, whose provenance we do not know but who wrote in Greek. Origen of Alexandria, replying to him in A.D. 248, reveals that in the territory of his acquaintance the situation had not altered. "We do not fight under the emperor," he testified, "although he require it."[20] Origen through his travels was able to speak not only for Egypt, but also for Palestine, Greece, and Asia Minor. The situation must have been on the point of change at the time of his death in A.D. 251, because we have one inscription from Phrygia revealing Christian soldiers about the middle of the century.[21]

In northern Africa there is evidence alike of acceptance and rejection of military service. Tertullian, who is our witness for the presence of Christians in the army, also affirms that many upon conversion withdrew from military service.[22] Cyprian, as we have seen, mentions two soldier martyrs, yet close to the grave of Cyprian was buried a youth Maximillianus, executed for his conscientious objection to wearing the soldier's badge.[23]

Of the pre-Constantinian inscriptions mentioning Christian soldiers one is from Besançon, one from Phrygia, and six from Rome. Notoriously this Church took the initiative in leniency toward offenders. Rome under Callistus first let down the bars in

[19] Cadoux EC, p. 421.
[20] Cels. VIII, 73.
[21] W. M. Ramsay, Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1895), p. 717, no. 651.
[22] Cor. XI.
[23] Ruinart, Acta Martyrum (Ratisbon, 1859), pp. 340–42.

granting forgiveness to sexual offenders (A.D. 220) and under Cornelius to apostates (A.D. 250). We cannot be certain, but the assumption is plausible that Rome may have been ahead of other Christian communities in relaxing opposition to the military profession.

But the most indisputable and persistent tradition of Christian sanction for participation in warfare comes from the eastern provinces. The Thundering Legion, which contained Christian soldiers in A.D. 173, was recruited in the province of Melitene in southern Armenia. In that same district early in the fourth century when a persecuting emperor attempted to enforce idolatry, the Armenian Christians took up arms and defeated him.[24] In Syria Abgar IX, the king of Edessa (A.D. 179–216) was converted to Christianity in A.D. 202 and for the remainder of his reign made this religion the official cult of Osrhoene. The Constantinian revolution was thus anticipated on the eastern fringe of the empire by fully a century. We can scarcely suppose that the ruler of a frontier province would have embraced the faith if by so doing he deprived himself of military resources. In Palmyra in A.D. 278 Paul of Samosata was the first Christian bishop to hold the post of civil magistrate and to employ a bodyguard.[25] In the fourth century Bishop James of Nisibis inspired the defense against the Persians by calling upon the name of the Lord who sent clouds of mosquitoes and gnats to tickle the trunks of the enemy's elephants and the nostrils of his horses.[26] These examples indicate a continuous tradition of military service on the part of Christians on the eastern frontier.

But the Constantinian revolution was anticipated in this region in another respect. When the State favored the Church and the Church sanctioned warfare, a cleavage took place within the Church itself and the more rigorous spirits adopted a strenuously ascetic and even a monastic life with the repudiation of military service. Syrian Christianity in the third century already had its solitaries dedicated to chastity and abstinence from wine and flesh.[27] In such circles we find also a rejection of military service.

[24] Eusebius HE IX, 8, 2–4.
[25] Ibid. VII, 30, 8.
[26] Theodoret HE II, 26.
[27] F. C. Burkitt, Early Eastern Christianity (London, 1904).

Tatian as early as the second century is a forerunner. His provenance is commonly thought to have been Mesopotamia. He was an ascetic and a founder of the Encratites. Military service appears in a list of his aversions: "I have no desire to rule. I crave not riches. I decline military command. I hate fornication." [28] The Bardesanic Book of the Laws, composed in Syriac early in the third century, by way of disproving astrology points out approvingly that among the people known as the Seres, Mars the planet of war has not sufficient power to "compel a man to shed the blood of his brother with an iron weapon." [29] A case of the rejection of military service by Christians in the region of Mesopotamia is recorded for the closing years of the fourth century where a large number of soldiers having been converted while on garrison duty, "threw off the belt of military service." [30] Even if the story be legendary, it testifies to an aversion to participation in warfare on the part of its author, writing on the eastern frontier in the early fourth century.

The evidence, then, for Christians in the armed forces before the time of Constantine adds up to this: until the decade 170–80 we are devoid of evidence. From then on the references to Christian soldiers increase. The numbers cannot be computed. The greatest objection to military service appears to have been in the Hellenistic East. The Christians in northern Africa were divided. The Roman church in the late second and third centuries did not forbid epitaphs recording the military profession. The eastern frontier reveals the most extensive Christian participation in warfare, though concurrently we find a protest against it among groups tending to ascetic and monastic ideals.

The attitude of ecclesiastical writers toward military service on the part of Christians during the same period shows a correlation with the data as to the actual practice. The period in which we have no evidence of Christians in the ranks is also the period in which there is no specific prohibition of such service. The pronouncements of the Fathers up to A.D. 180 are general. Athenagoras says that Christians "do not strike back, do not go to law

[28] Oratio ad Graecos XI.
[29] Ante-Nicene Fathers VIII, 730. (Abbreviation: ANF.)
[30] Acts of Archelaus and Mani 1, ANF VI, 179.

when robbed; they give to them that ask of them and love their neighbors as themselves." [31] Justin Martyr is more specific: "We who were filled with war and mutual slaughter and every wickedness have each of us in all the world changed our weapons of war — swords into plows and spears into agricultural implements." [32] "We who formerly murdered one another now not only do not make war upon our enemies but that we may not lie or deceive our judges, we gladly die confessing Christ." [33]

The period from A.D. 180 until the time of Constantine exhibits both in the East and West a number of condemnations more or less explicit of military service. In the east we have already observed the witness of Celsus and Origen to total abstinence for the period up to A.D. 250. Clement of Alexandria is less precise. When his plea for an equal code of conduct for women and for men met the objection that women, unlike men, are not trained for war, he preserved the equality by denying to men also military exercises.[34] "In peace, not in war, we are trained. War needs great preparation but peace and love, quiet sisters, require no arms nor extensive outlay." [35] Various peoples incite the passions of war by martial music. Christians employ only the word of God, the instrument of peace.[36] "If the loud trumpet summons soldiers to war, shall not Christ with a strain of peace to the ends of the earth gather up his soldiers of peace? A bloodless army he has assembled by blood and by the word to give to them the Kingdom of Heaven. The trumpet of Christ is his gospel. He has sounded, we have heard. Let us then put on the armor of peace." [37] Irenaeus, despite his residence in Gaul, may be reckoned by origin, language and ideas to the East. He refers the prophecy of beating swords into plowshares to the Christians who do not know how to fight, but when struck offer the other cheek.[38]

In the West, Tertullian is the most unambiguous when he says

[31] Legatio pro Christianis XI.
[32] Trypho CX.
[33] I Apol. XXXIX.
[34] Stromata IV, 8. (Abbreviation: Str.)
[35] Paedagogus I, 12. (Abbreviation: Paed.)
[36] Ibid. II, 4, cf. II, 2.
[37] Protrepticus XI, 116. (Abbreviation: Protr.)
[38] Adversus Haereses IV, 34, 4. (Abbreviation: Haer.)

that Christ in disarming Peter ungirt every soldier.[39] In his Apology he avers that Christians were sufficiently numerous to offer successful resistance to persecuting emperors did they not count it better to be slain than to slay.[40] Again he inquires "Shall the Son of peace, for whom it is unlawful to go to law, be engaged in battle?" [41] Minucius Felix said that Christians cannot bear to see a man killed.[42] Cyprian remarked that homicide is considered a crime when committed by individuals, a virtue when carried on publicly.[43] God, however, designed iron for tilling, not for killing.[44] Arnobius, in a work composed A.D. 304–10, assumed that the tranquillity of the *Pax Romana* was the result of the peaceableness of Christians: "for since we in such numbers have learned from the precepts and laws of Christ not to repay evil with evil, to endure injury rather than to inflict it, to shed our own blood rather than to stain our hands and conscience with the blood of another, the ungrateful world now long owes to Christ this blessing that savage ferocity has been softened and hostile hands have refrained from the blood of a kindred creature." [45] Lactantius, writing A.D. 304–5, asserts: "God in prohibiting killing discountenances not only brigandage, which is contrary to human laws, but also that which men regard as legal. Participation in warfare therefore will not be legitimate to a just man whose military service is justice itself." [46] Thus all of the outstanding writers of the East and the West repudiated participation in warfare for Christians.

Yet some appear to have sanctioned military service if warfare were not involved as in the case of soldiers on garrison duty in tranquil areas or assigned to police tasks in an economy in which military and police functions were not differentiated.[47] For example, in the city of Rome fire protection and the keeping of the

[39] De Idolotria XIX. (Abbreviation: Idol.)
[40] Apol. XXXVII.
[41] Cor. XI.
[42] Octavius XXX, 6. (Abbreviation: Oct.)
[43] Ad Donatum VI, 10. (Abbreviation: Don.)
[44] De Habitu Virginum XI.
[45] Adversus Nationes I, 6. (Abbreviation: Nat.)
[46] Divinae Institutiones VI, xx, 15–16. (Abbreviation: Inst.)
[47] Naudet, "La Police chez les Romains," Mém. de l'Acad. des Sciences morales et pol. de l'Institut de France VI (1850), pp. 763–870.

peace were assigned to a military unit known as the *Vigiles*.[48] We have evidence of Christian participation in two branches of the service to which were committed largely police functions. The *beneficiarii* were troops assigned to the governors of provinces as an aid in the administration of their territory.[49] Several Christian epitaphs record this title.[50] And while they cannot be dated as distinctly pre-Constantinian, we have the testimony of Tertullian in A.D. 211 to Christian association with this branch.[51] A number of undated inscriptions describe Christians as *protectores*, *proctectores domestici* or simply *domestici*.[52] These titles in the late third century were conferred on those who previously had been denominated centurions. Their functions included the guarding of the emperor's person, the custody of prisoners, care of public transport and the mails, supervision of ordinance, and even secretarial duty, the two latter both in military and civilian administration.[53] An example of the type of service sanctioned even in Alexandria in the late third century is found in the case of Philoromus, a Christian layman who served as a judge attended by a military guard.[54]

In view of the diversified functions of Roman soldiers there were Christians who did not condemn military service as such, but only the taking of life. The Canons of Hippolytus in the early third century require that "a soldier of the civil authority must be taught not to kill men and to refuse to do so if he is commanded." [55] The injunction has greatly puzzled historians, who could not well understand how a Christian could be a soldier at all if he were under obligation not to kill. A recognition of the

[48] P. K. Baillie Reynolds, The Vigiles of Imperial Rome (Oxford, 1926).

[49] On their functions see Theodore Mommsen, Ephemeris Epigraphica IV (1881), pp. 529–30.

[50] DACh II p. 1160, no. 24.

[51] De Fuga XIII.

[52] DACh pp. 1172–73.

[53] E.-Ch. Babut, "La guarde impériale et les officiers de l'armée romaine," Rev. Hist. CXIV (1913), pp. 225–60: CXVI (1914), pp. 225–93. He holds that the *domestici* did not long remain merely an imperial guard. Ernst Stein dissents in his Geschichte des spätröm. Reiches (1928), p. 82.

[54] Eusebius HE VIII, ix, 7.

[55] Burton Scott Easton, The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus (New York, 1934), Pt. II, Canons 16, p. 42. He justifies the attribution of these canons to Hippolytus.

distinction between war time and peace time service is apparent in Tertullian, who, however, rejected both. He inquired: "How will a Christian take part in war, nay, how will he serve even in peace?" [56]

The understanding of a passage in Clement of Alexandria is clarified by this distinction. The translation by Butterworth in the Loeb Library is as follows: "Were you a soldier on campaign when the knowledge of God laid hold on you? Then listen to the commander who signals righteousness." [57] Plainly Clement does not call upon the Christian convert to leave the ranks. What restriction is laid upon him depends in part on the interpretation of the word "commander." Some of the translators understand an earthly general issuing orders in a just war. Combès, for example, translates: "*La foi chrétienne t'a saisi dans le métier des armes, obéis au capitaine qui t'ordonne des choses justes.*" [58] Eppstein represents Clement as treating "the soldier's profession on a level with any other legitimate calling." [59] Such an interpretation is difficult to square with the citations given above from Clement in condemnation of warfare. The passage needs to be interpreted in its context. It is the third in a series. The two preceding are these: "Till the ground, we say, if you are a husbandman; but recognize God in your husbandry. Sail the sea, you who love seafaring; but ever call upon the heavenly pilot." And then this passage. Can we suppose that Clement, having mentioned God in the first and the heavenly pilot in the second couplet, should be talking about an earthly commander in the third, particularly since in another passage he refers to "our great General, the Word, the Commander-in-Chief of the universe"? [60] He is saying that if a soldier is converted while in the army he may remain, but he becomes subject to a divine commander. While there is no express statement that police functions only are permissible, such an in-

[56] Idol. XIX.

[57] Protr. X, 100. *γεώργει, φαμέν, εἰ γεωργὸς εἶ, ἀλλὰ γνῶθι τὸν θεὸν γεωργῶν, καὶ πλεῖθι ὁ τῆς ναυτιλίας ἐρῶν, ἀλλὰ τὸν οὐράνιον κυβερνήτην παρακαλῶν. στρατευόμενόν σε κατείληφεν ἡ γνῶσις. τοῦ δίκαια σημαίνοντος ἄκουε στρατηγοῦ.*

[58] Gustave Combès, La Doctrine Politique de Saint Augustin (Paris, 1927), p. 261.

[59] John Eppstein, The Catholic Tradition of the Law of Nations (Washington D. C., 1935), p. 40.

[60] Paed. I, viii, 65, l. *ὁ μέγας ἡμῶν ἐκεῖνος, στρατηγός, ὁ τῶν ὅλων ἡγεμὼν λόγος.*

terpretation harmonizes this passage with those from Clement in which warfare is condemned.

The distinction likewise makes sense of the baffling canon of the Council of Arles which in A.D. 314 decreed that those who lay down their arms *in peace* should abstain from communion: *De his qui arma proiciunt in pace placuit abstineri eos a communione* (Canon III). The injunction has given great difficulty for commentators, partly because it appears so completely to reverse the previous position of the Church.[61] The words *in pace* are particularly troublesome. Most scholars have referred them to the peace of the Church. The meaning then is that a Christian may leave the army under a persecuting emperor, but not under a tolerating sovereign like Constantine. But such is certainly not the natural sense of the words. The normal antithesis to *in pace* is *in bello*. The meaning then is that the Christian is not to lay down his arms in time of peace, when he may be called upon only for police duty, but he is still at liberty to withdraw in case of war. This interpretation is strengthened by the example of Martin of Tours, who on conversion remained in the army for two years until an actual battle was imminent, and only then declined longer to serve. This was in the year A.D. 336.[62] We may say then that ecclesiastical authors before Constantine condemned Christian participation in warfare, though not necessarily military service in time of peace.

The reasons for their condemnation have been variously assessed and at this point the historian is under severe temptation to weight the factors in favor of his own interpretation of the Christian ethic. Those who in our day justify Christian participation in warfare are disposed to explain the early Christians' objection in terms of circumstances peculiar to their time. The Catholics commonly stress the difficulties of avoiding idolatry in the pagan army. Protestants have emphasized the indifference of the early church to all political life because of the expectation of the speedy return of the Lord.

The danger of idolatry in military service was real. The cult of the deified emperor was particularly prevalent in the camps. Offi-

[61] Harnack MC, p. 87f.
[62] Sulpicius Severus, Vita Martini, I, 1–4.

cers were called upon to sacrifice; privates participated at least by their attendance.[63] Origen listed idolatry and robbery as sins common in the army.[64] On the other hand, Tertullian indicated that the problem was not so acute for the private solider, who was not called upon actually to perform a sacrifice.[65] Moreover one cannot well understand how the Church could have permitted its members to remain in the service even in peace time in the pre-Constantinian period if idolatry had been unavoidable.

The influence of eschatological ideas upon the social attitudes of the early Christians is more difficult to appraise because no Christian author ever overtly assigns the "shortening of the times" as a reason for objection to participation in warfare. The question is not quite so simple as it often appears to those who explain pacifism in terms of eschatology, because the implications of eschatology are not necessarily pacifistic. Whereas those who look forward to the speedy dissolution of the political system by which they are oppressed will not be disposed to fight for its maintenance, they may be willing by fighting to hasten its overthrow. If the effect of eschatology in the early church was quietism, the first problem is to explain why it was not rather revolution as in the Messianic wars of Judaism. That this concept did not carry over into Christianity has been abundantly demonstrated by Hans Windisch,[66] and James Moffatt clearly recognized that even the Christian chiliasts were not Fifth Monarchy men.[67] That they were not is due to a deliberate repudiation of the militancy of contemporary Judaism.

Whether the disinclination to fight on behalf of the empire was motivated by the expectation of its imminent doom admits of a measure of testing in the light of extant evidence. Already in the second century the hope was waning. The Montanists who sought

[63] Leclercq, DACh. II, pp. 1116–19.

[64] Μάλιστα τὸ ἁμάρτημα [τῆς εἰδωλολατρίας] εὑρίσκεται ἐν ταῖς στρατευομένοις . . . . τοῦτο τὸ ἁμάρτημα τὸ τῆς κλοπῆς σχέδον πάντες οἱ στρατεύομενοι ἁμαρτάνουσιν. Adolf Harnack, "Der kirchengeschichtliche Ertrag des exegetischen Arbeiten des Origenes," Texte und Untersuchungen XLII, 3 (1918), p. 117[2] from Cramer, Catena in I Cor. V, p. 98 to which I have not had access.

[65] Idol. XIX.

[66] Hans Windisch, Der messianische Krieg und das Urchristentum (Tübingen, 1909).

[67] DAC II, p. 651a.

to keep it alive were repudiated by the church at large. The question then is whether pacifism is Montanist rather than Catholic. The question hinges somewhat on the interpretation of one tract of Tertullian and on the determination of the date of another. The common Catholic view is that when he wrote the Apology in A.D. 197, Tertullian was a Catholic and not a pacifist. When he wrote the De Idolatria he had become a Montanist and a pacifist. In the Apology Tertullian does refute the charge of social aloofness on the part of Christians by pointing to their presence even in the army. On the other hand, in the same tract he declares that the reason why Christians do not take advantage of their numbers to resist persecution by arms was that they would rather be slain than slay. The objection to warfare is thus not absent from the Apology. The dating of the De Idolatria in the Montanist period depends on circuitous reasoning. If pacifism must be Montanist, then as Monceaux contended the tract is to be coupled with the De Corona (A.D. 211) and to be dated the following year in A.D. 212.[68] But Harnack rightly rejoined that rigorism is not Montanism. He associated this work with the De Spectaculis and assigned both to the period prior to Tertullian's conversion to Montanism in A.D. 202.[69]

In the third century we discover that among pacifist authors the eschatological hope had already waned. Some blunted the social subversiveness of the expectation of the return of the Lord by advancing the date, Lactantius by 200 years, Hippolytus by 300.[70] The Alexandrians, Clement and Origen, achieved the same end by a spiritualization of the entire concept.[71] What is still more significant is that Christians were coming more to fear than to desire the consummation because it must be preceded by calamities. They could not quite make up their minds whether to pray "Come quickly, Lord Jesus," or for the "delay of the end." Even Tertullian, whose pacifism has been attributed to his expectation

[68] Paul Monceaux, "Chronologie des Oeuvres de Tertullien," Revue de Philologie N. S. XXII (1898), pp. 77–92.

[69] Adolf Harnack, Die Chronologie der altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius II (Leipzig, 1904), p. 273.

[70] Cadoux EC, pp. 347, 479. Cf. Robert Frick, "Die Geschichte des Reich-Gottes-Gedankens in der alten Kirche bis zu Origenes und Augustin," Beihefte z. Zt. f. d. neutestamentliche Wissenschaft VI (1928).

[71] Cadoux, EC 305 f.

of the imminent advent, found himself praying at times *pro mora finis*.[72]

A belief in the limited duration of earthly society is by no means so significant for the political and social thought of the early church as the universal subjection of the temporal to the eternal. All Christians placed their citizenship in heaven. On earth they were but pilgrims and strangers.[73] A reason definitely assigned for their unwillingness, despite their numbers, to take up arms against their persecutors is the certainty of their vindication in the life to come.[74]

A further reason commonly adduced for the aversion of Christians to military service in the pre-Constantinian period is their hostility to Rome as a persecuting power. Why should they fight for the maintenance of an empire which threw them to the beasts? The situation at this point is complex. The Christians were not of one mind in their attitude toward Rome. The political thinking of the early church was rooted in the New Testament, where divergent emphases are apparent. The Luken writings are the most favorable to Rome, where cognizance is taken of the birth of Christ under Augustus and of Paul's appeal to Caesar. The most hostile is the book of Revelation, for which Rome is Babylon, drunk with the blood of the saints. In between we have the discriminating attitude of Jesus who enjoins rendering what is due both to Caesar and to God. The Apostle Paul is more specific. In I Thessalonians he appears to identify the deified emperor with the "man of sin" and the Roman empire with "the power that restrains" the forces of chaos. In Romans 13 "the powers that be are ordained of God" to restrain the bad and protect the good.[75]

[72] Apol. XXXII, XXXIX, Ad Scapulum III. But *immo quam celeriter veniat* in De Oratione V. On the *mora finis* compare Cyprian Don. XX. For the idea in Hippolytus see Karl J. Neumann, Hippolytus von Rom in seiner Stellung zu Staat und Welt (Leipzig, 1902), pp. 56–57.

[73] The Epistle of Diognetus affords a classic statement. For many similar passages consult Luigi Salvatorelli, "Il pensiero del Cristianismo antico intorno allo stato, dagli Apologeti ad Origene," Bilychnis XVI (1920), pp. 264–79, 333–52; also Wilhelm Wagner, Der Christ und die Welt nach Clemens von Alexandrien (Göttingen, 1903).

[74] Cyprian Ad Demetrianum XVII and Tertullian, De Spectaculis

[75] Maurice Goguel, Les chrétiens et l'Empire Romain à l'époque du Nouveau Testament (Paris, 1908).

In the early church all of these attitudes reappear with the preponderance in the middle of the way. Melito of Sardis alone takes the view, later to be so popular, that the Roman empire and Christianity were conjoint works of God for the benefit of mankind.[76] The hostility of Revelation appears only in Commodianus who would welcome a Gothic invasion.[77] The main line of Christian thinking followed the thought of Paul. The deification of the emperor was resisted unto death, but the empire was viewed as a force restraining disorder.[78]

The judgment upon the empire was qualified. The Christians neither condoned its sins nor despised its benefits. The Church combined all the imprecations of the conquered upon Rome with the encomia of the panegyrists.[79] The apologists, in order to parry the charge of calamity-bringing leveled against their religion, quarried in the classical literature which recorded and bemoaned Roman decadence. Horace had seen a virus of corruption injected into the Roman bloodstream when the city was founded through the fratricide of Romulus.[80] Tertullian takes over the reproach,[81] and Minucius Felix fully develops the theme.[82] Sallust held that Rome by destroying Carthage lost the stimulus of rivalry and fell a prey to dissension, cruelty, ambition, luxury, and debauchery.[83] This thesis is taken over by Lactantius, who declared: "When Carthage was taken away, long her rival in

[76] Eusebius, HE IV, xxvi, 7.

[77] "Carmina," Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum XV. The date has been greatly controverted. The whole discussion was reviewed and reëxamined by Josef Martin, "Studien und Beiträge zur Erklärung und Zeitbestimmung Commodians," Texte und Untersuchungen XXXIX (1913). Against the view of H. Brewer, who placed the work in the latter part of the fifth century, Martin reverts to the view of the editor of the CSEL that the Carmina were written during the time of the last persecution toward the end of the third or the beginning of the fourth century.

[78] On Rome as *τὸ κατέχον*: Tertullian, Res. XXIV; Origen, Com. in Joh. 6, 3; Lactantius, Inst. VII, 25, Hippolytus, In Danielem IV, 21, 3.

[79] Harald Fuchs, Der geistige Widerstand gegen Rom in der antiken Welt (Berlin, 1938).

[80] Ep. VII.

[81] Nat. IX.

[82] Oct. XXV.

[83] Cat. I–X and Fragmenta 11 and 12. This theme of the "fall" of Rome goes back to the speech of Scipio Nasica who advised against the demolition of Carthage on the ground that if Rome were deprived of an external foe she would succumb to internal strife. Consult Matthias Gelzer, "Nasicas Widerspruch gegen die Zerstörung Karthagos," Philologus LXXXVI (1930–31), pp. 261–99.

power, Rome stretched out her hands by land and sea over the whole world . . . abused her strength, and thereby destroyed herself." [84] Augustine was subsequently to combine these themes in a theory of progressive degeneration.[85] The process by which Roman rule had been acquired was subjected to scathing denunciation. Rome grew great, averred Tertullian, not by religion, but by wars which always injure religion.[86] Lactantius was scornful of the Roman "just war," since entirely in accord with its rules Rome had subjugated the world.[87]

At the same time the early church did not follow the book of Revelation in identifying Rome with Antichrist.[88] The blessings of the Roman peace were appreciated. Irenaeus rejoiced that the roads were free from brigands and the seas from pirates.[89] Tertullian was glad that Cathage enjoyed tranquillity.[90] And Origen saw in the Roman peace a providential provision for the dissemination of the gospel.[91] The Christians did not wish to see the empire overthrown.

Ought they not, then, to assist in her maintenance by force of arms? This was precisely the question addressed to them by Celsus. Either, said he, the Christians should assume the full burdens of citizenship or else cease to have children and withdraw from the world.[92] The church was eventually to agree with him and then participation in civil and military affairs was justified on the basis of Romans 13, "The powers that be are ordained of God." The passage, however, was capable of a different interpretation. The early church took it to mean that the coercive power of the state was instituted to curb sinners and to them its administration should be left. Origen compared the state to a chain gang composed of criminals, albeit doing a useful work.[93]

[84] Inst. VII, 15.
[85] De Civitate Dei II, 18 and III, 6 and 21.
[86] Apol. XXV.
[87] Inst. VI, 9.
[88] Wilhelm Bousset, The Antichrist Legend (London, 1896), p. 126.
[89] Haer, IV, 30, 3.
[90] De Pallio I.
[91] Cels. II, 30. Cf. Cadoux, EC pp. 378 and 386.
[92] Cels. VIII, 55.
[93] Cels. IV, 70. Compare Guglielmo Massart, Società e stato nel cristianesimo primitivo: la concezione di Origene (Padua, 1932).

Nothing, said Tertullian, is more alien to a Christian than public life.[94]

Such a position certainly must have been one of political irresponsibility unless the Christians believed that the maintenance of the empire which they desired was possible without force of arms. That, they did believe. Origen declared that the Christians by their prayers and their disciplined lives were of more use than soldiers to kings, because wars are fomented by demons who inspire the violation of oaths and disturb the peace.[95] "Men fight, said he, "sometimes because of hunger and more frequently because of avarice, the lust of power, an insane craving for vain glory and absence of a tranquil disposition." [96] The greatest warfare, in other words, is not with human enemies but with those spiritual forces which make men into enemies. The greatest enemy is enmity. This the Church has the power to overcome through the indwelling spirit of Christ. Christianity is making a reality of the *Pax Romana* by overcoming inner dissension and will overcome even the barbarian foes by bringing them under the sway of the Winsome Word.[97] Justin Martyr saw in Christianity rather than in the empire the force restraining the powers of chaos.[98] Irenaeus regarded the Church as the restoration of the lost Paradise.[99] For Origen, office in the Church was more challenging than office in the empire.[100]

The reason was that for the Christians peace itself was a dynamic force, not simply as in the Old Testament a synonym for prosperity: "Let peace be within thy walls and prosperity within thy palaces." [101] Nor as among the Greeks the mere absence of

[94] Apol. XXXVIII. [95] Cels. VIII, 73.

[96] "Comm. Ser. 37 in Mt." 24, 7–8. Die griechischen christlichen Schriftstellern XXXVIII, p. 69.

[97] Cels. VIII, 72. [98] II Apol. VII.

[99] Haer. V, 20. Compare Wolfgang Schmidt, Die Kirche bei Irenaeus (Helsingfors, 1934).

[100] Cels. VIII, 75. Compare Heinrich Weinel, Die Stellung des Urchristentums zum Staat (Tübingen, 1908).

[101] Ps. 122, 7. On the meaning of *shalom* consult Gerhard Kittel, Theologisches Wörterbuch z. Neuen Testament (Stuttgart, 1935) under εἰρήνη and Johann Hempel, "Die israelitische Anschauungen von Segen unf Fluch im Lichte altorientalische Parallelen," Zt. d. deutschen morganländischen Gesell. LXXIX (1925), pp. 20–110. Since *shalom* appears in personal names there is a good discussion in Martin Noth, "Die israelitischen Personnennamen in Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung," Beiträge zur Wiss. v. Alten v. Neuen Test. III, 10 (1928).

war, though also the giver of plenty.[102] Among the Romans *pax* was a pact, an agreement to abstain from fighting.[103] These physical and negative connotations of peace were altered by the early Christians. For them peace was positive, inward, religious and creative. The antithesis of peace was not so much war as contention. The accompaniment of peace was not the horn of plenty but joy and life. "The mind of the flesh is death. The mind of the spirit is life and peace." [104] The Christian is able to bestow peace,[105] because the peace of God guards his heart.[106] "Since he is commanded to be peaceful even with those who hate peace, he can take the sword against no one." [107]

Peace is the fruit of love, and love likewise has a unique quality in Christianity. It is not that love which seeks self-fulfillment through union with the beloved, even though that beloved be God (ἔρως). It is not that love which conditions its bounty upon the worth of the recipient, who if he is to be loved by God must remember His precepts to do them. Christian love is that love which prompts the father to fall on the neck of the prodigal and kiss him, a love which forgives, suffers, reconciles and redeems. This is the love set forth by Jesus and by Paul. Its quality has not been lost in the early church. Tertullian asked, "If we are enjoined to love our enemies, whom have we to hate? If injured we are forbidden to retaliate. Who then can suffer injury at our hands?" [108] Clement of Alexandria says to the heathen: "If you enroll as one of God's people, heaven is your country and God your lawgiver. And what are his laws? . . . Thou shalt not kill. . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. To him that strikes thee on the one cheek, turn also the other." [109] Cyprian reminds his brethren of Paul's hymn of love, "And what more — that you should not curse; that you should not seek again your goods when

[102] W. Nestle, "Der Friedensgedanke in der antiken Welt," Philologus Suppl. XXXI, 1 (1938) and the bibliography listed in Michael Rostovtzeff, Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World III (Oxford, 1941), p. 1358.

[103] Article "Pax" in Roscher's Lexikon.

[104] Rom. 8, 6.

[105] Mt. 10, 13.

[106] Phil. 4, 7. Compare Harald Fuchs, "Augustin und der antike Friedensgedanke," Neue philol. Untersuchungen III (Berlin, 1926).

[107] Origen, "Comm. Ser. 102 in Matth." GCS XXXVIII, p. 221–22.

[108] Apol. XXXVII. Cf. Justin 1 Apol. XIV.

[109] Protr. X.

taken from you; when buffeted you should turn the other cheek; and forgive not seven times but seventy times seven. . . . That you should love your enemies and pray for your adversaries and persecutors?" [110] Dionysius of Alexandria declared: "Love is ever on the alert to do good even to him who is unwilling to receive it." [111] Tertullian called love of enemies the "principal precept." [112] And Justin inquired: "If you love merely those that love you, what do you that is *new*?" [113] Such was the ideal, however far practice may have fallen short. This devotion to redeeming love provided the faith that evil could be restrained otherwise than by force of arms.

Concretely the early church saw an incompatibility between love and killing. In later times these were harmonized on the ground that the destruction of the body does not entail the annihilation of the soul. But the early church had a strong aversion to bloodshed. To some extent this was due to the western text of the Apostolic Decrees recorded in the 15th chapter of the Book of Acts. The eastern text which came to prevail enacts abstention from "things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication." [114] In this context blood was taken to mean the eating of blood. The western text as known to a long series of Latin authors from Tertullian to Augustine reads: "To abstain from things sacrified to idols, from fornication, and from blood," plus the Golden Rule. In that context blood was taken to mean bloodshed. Whichever text is correct, and many scholars regard the western as the more defensible, the form containing bloodshed was early and widely received. It was applied alike to murder, capital punishment, and killing in war. On the basis of this verse Tertullian formulated the three irremissible sins as idolatry, adultery, and homicide.[115] And Augustine testified that many regarded these three as *crimina mortifera*.[116] This

[110] De Patientia XV-XVI.
[111] Ep. XIV.
[112] De Patientia VI.
[113] I Apol. XV.
[114] Acts 15, 29.
[115] De Pudicitia XII.
[116] This and many other citations in Gotthold Resch, "Das Aposteldekret nach ausserkanonischen Textgestalt," Texte und Untersuchungen XXVIII, N. F. XIII, 3 (1905), p. 12, no. 21, cf. p. 43.

is not to say of course that the aversion to *effusio sanguinis* rested solely upon the western form of this text. The easterners equally shrank from bloodshed.

Examples are extant from various sections of the empire. In the West, Tertullian declares that the Christian would rather be killed than kill.[117] For Minucius Felix: "It is not right for us either to see or hear a man being killed." [118] Cyprian lamented that the world was wet with bloodshed and homicide esteemed a virtue if practiced publicly.[119] Arnobius thought it better to pour out one's own blood than to stain one's hands and conscience with the blood of another. [120] Lactantius declared that when God forbade killing he forbade not only brigandage but also that which is regarded as legal among men.[121] Vitricius described his rejection of military service in the words, *arma sanguinis obiecisti*.[122] In the East, Athenagoras said that the Christian cannot bear to see a man put to death even justly.[123] Origen averred that "God did not deem it becoming to his own divine legislation to allow the killing of any man whatever." [124] The Canons of Hippolytus enacted that "a soldier of civil authority must be taught not to kill men and to refuse to do so if he is commanded." [125] Even after the objection to warfare was abandoned by the Church, the aversion to bloodshed remained. Basil the Great wrote: "Killing in war was differentiated by our fathers from murder . . . nevertheless perhaps it would be well that those whose hands are unclean abstain from communion for three years." [126] In Syria the Bardesanic Book of the Laws asserts that Mars cannot compel a man "to shed the blood of his brother." [127]

Attention thus far has been given only to orthodox Christian writers. The one exception is Tertullian who became a Montanist but his pacifism, as we have seen, is to be found also in his Catholic

[117] Apol. XXXVII.
[118] Oct. XXX, 6.
[119] Don. VI, 10.
[120] Nat. I, 6.
[121] Instit. VI, 20.
[122] Paulini Nol. Ep. XVIII, 7, Migne PL LXI, 240C.
[123] Legatio XXXV.
[124] Cels. III, 7.
[125] Canon XVI.
[126] Ep. Cl. II, 188, 13. Migne PG XXXII, 682.
[127] ANF VIII, 728.

period and his formulation of the three cardinal sins is perfectly Catholic, for the Montanists had seven. There is one heretic of the early church who deserves special mention because his rejection of the Old Testament and its God was so largely motivated by an objection to their warlike character. That man was Marcion. He blamed David for killing blind men, whereas Christ cured the blind; Elisha for bringing down fire from heaven, which Christ forbade. The rule of an eye for an eye was contrasted with the injunction to turn the other cheek. "Moses stretched out his hands toward God upon the mountain top in order that he might destroy many in war. Our Lord being good stretched out his hands [upon the cross] in order to save men." The Apostle Paul enjoined that we should not let the sun go down upon our wrath, but Joshua kept the sun up until his wrath went down.[128] In these strictures Marcion was appealing to standards recognized also by the orthodox, but he was heretical in that he regarded matter as evil and in consequence rejected marriage and denied the reality of Christ's earthly body. Those who take this view not infrequently object to war as a carnal struggle and to bloodshed as religiously defiling.

Pagan concepts of peace and war incorporated in early Christian literature deserve a passing mention. The Stoic concept of cosmic peace in which all the heavenly bodies observe their appointed courses, so eloquently expressed by Dion of Prusa,[129] occurs in Clement of Rome.[130] The reproach to men that they are less peaceful than the beasts who do not make war upon one another within the same species [131] is absent, so far as I am aware, in Christian literature before Augustine. The theme, running from Hesiod through Ovid, of the Golden Age of Saturn, the fall from which was marked by the introduction of war, is fused by Lactantius with the peace of Eden in the last days to be restored.[132] The objection to war as contravening humanity and offending against man as "a sacred animal" [133] is reminiscent of Seneca.[134] If

[128] Passages collected in Adolf Harnack, "Marcion," Texte und Untersuchungen XLV (1921), p. 104.

[129] Or. XL, 35, H. F. Arnim, Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta II, 55, 20ff. Cf. Fuchs, Augustin, pp. 101–103.

[130] Ep. ad Cor. XX.

[131] Fuchs, Augustin, pp. 21 and 103–109.

[132] Inst. VII, 24.

[133] Ibid. VI, 20.

[134] Ep. XCIX.

Lactantius is the author of De Mortibus Persecutorum, which is by no means certain,[135] then he shifted his ground and hailed an armed champion of the faith as the Lord's Anointed. The shift if it really occurred may be possible because his objection to war was rooted in nothing deeper than pagan *humanitas*. The classical world with all its paeans of peace produced very little specific repudiation of war. So far as I have been able to discover, Musonius was the only one who ever urged soldiers to lay down their arms.[136]

The position taken by the leaders of the early church raised acute problems for which no well-grounded solution was ever found. In the ethical sphere their contention that they wished the empire to survive and thought they were doing more than the legions for its preservation was in a measure compromised by their readiness not only to pray for emperors, which meant little since prayers were offered also for enemies and persecutors,[137] but also to pray for their armies that they might be *brave*: so Tertullian.[138] The explanation for this and similar passages is that the Church recognized different ethical levels. For those who have chosen to fight bravery is better than cowardice. Humane conduct in war is superior to cruelty. Clement of Alexandria commends the humanity of the code of war in Deuteronomy 20.[139] Origen proposed that if men will fight they should imitate the bees in observing the rules of just war.[140] The Church had a high admiration for military virtues, discipline, courage, and sacrifice, and for that reason made such extensive use of military imagery. At one point Origen hints at a solution by way of a functional division of society according to which pagan emperors and their armies should fight, while all Christians like the pagan priests should be exempt in order to pray.[141] Such a cleavage was eventually to divide Christians. Eusebius in A.D. 313 foreshadowed the ultimate solution when he posited two grades of Christian conduct, the first for the laity who might participate in pure marriages, just wars, in

[135] Lietzmann, article "Lactantius" in Pauly-Wissowa.
[136] Tacitus, Hist. III, 81.
[137] William Mangold, De Ecclesia primitiva pro Caesaribus ac magistratibus Romanis preces fundente dissertatio (Bonn, 1881).
[138] Apol. XXX.
[139] Str. II, 18.
[140] Cels. IV, 82.
[141] Ibid. VIII, 73.

farming, trade and civic pursuits; and the second for the clergy, requiring celibacy, poverty, aloofness from the world and complete dedication to God.[142]

A deeper problem was theological, for the orthodox writers conceded that God at certain times had and would commend wars. The divine sanction for warring Israel in the past and for the Messianic wars in the future, even though Christians should not participate, made pacifism something of an ad interim ethic for God. The ethical problem raised by the Old Testament wars could be handled in one of three ways. They might be repudiated entirely as by Marcion. This was the simplest solution and must have been very tempting to a man like Tertullian who found the Christians in the army in his day justifying their conduct by the example of Joshua.[143] But the Church was not willing to jettison the Old Testament. Another solution was by way of allegory and Origen asserted that the apostles would never have permitted that the disciples of Christ, who came to teach peace, should read the Jewish historical books unless the horrible wars recounted in the Old Testament could be spiritually understood.[144] A third solution was chronological and relegated the wars of the Old Testament to a dispensation now superseded. Tertullian in this way disposed of the *lex talionis*.[145] And Origen on one occasion recognized the wars of Israel as having been necessary for the preservation of the Jewish state. Because wars are no longer allowed God suffered the dissolution of that state.[146] But why then did He ever ordain it in the first place? In other words, if war can sometimes play a part in the economy of God, can it be that God himself operates on two levels? This problem was never fully sensed by the early church, let alone satisfactorily answered.

[142] Demonstratio Evangelica I, viii, 29b–30b, Cf. Cadoux, EC 469[1] and 578.
[143] Idol. XIX.
[144] Hom. in Jesu Nave XV, 1.
[145] Adversus Marcionem IV, 16.
[146] Cels. VII, 26.

# THE RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF THE 'HISTORIA AVGVSTA'

The object of this short note is to check the date of the 'Historia Augusta,' which is usually determined from a number of very special allusions, by its attitude towards a matter of universal interest — religion.[1]

(1) The 'Historia' cannot be, what it pretends to be — a document of the age of Diocletian and Constantine. There is no trace of the high tension produced by persecution succeeding toleration and followed again by toleration, enriched by imperial favor. A writer of that age might treat Christianity in one of several ways — with denunciation or the silence of absolute contempt, as an enemy — or with enthusiastic defence, as a friend: never with the nerveless and inept dislike of the 'Historia.'[2]

(2) With equal certainty we may say that it cannot be later than the triumph of Christianity as a state religion under Theodosius the Great. Later pagans, even if, like Zosimus, they still loved paganism, could not pretend that it was not a lost cause.

(3) The 'Historia' must belong, then, to the period between the two tides — the entry of Christianity into imperial favor and its transition to persecution and intolerance — i.e., c. A.D. 312–390. It was a time of toleration. Every man was to worship God, as he thought right — but the Emperors made no secret of their own preference. Paganism was not to be killed, but no one was to prevent it dying a natural death.

It is to this age that the writers of the 'Historia' belong. Pagans they remain. Pagan beliefs, rites and sacrifices are to them integral parts of life and assure the divine favor. But the tension of religious conflict is relaxed. Christianity is known, and, in a sense, accepted. There is neither the anger nor the contempt of a paganism still assured of power. There is an occasional suggestion of a possible compromise between old and new, as when, in the life of Severus Alexander, we learn that he had an image of Christ in his 'lararium,' or that he planned to revive an idea of Hadrian's, to build a temple to Christ and receive him among the gods.[3] There is an occasional jibe, as when Severus Alexander assigned a disputed site to the Christians, rather than to the 'popinarii,' and observed 'melius esse, ut quemadmodumcumque illic deus colatur, quam

[1] I shall speak conventionally of the 'writers' of the 'Historia,' but assume as a working hypothesis that the work, as we have it, is one.

[2] But see also below.

[3] Sev. Alex. 29.2, 43, 6.7.

popinariis dedatur';[4] or when Aurelian scolded the Senate for not consulting the Sibylline books, 'prouide quasi in Christianorum ecclesia, non in templo deorum ommium tractaretis.'[5] There is only one case in which bitterness is fully exposed, — the letter of Hadrian about the people of Alexandria: the context is bitter, and, with a rise in bitterness, goes a rise in wit.[6]

To what part of this period, A.D. 312–390, should the 'Historia' be assigned? Certainly not to its early years, while the passions raised by the persecution were still raging. Even when the writers pretend to stand close to the events of these years, they betray despite themselves a sense of distance. Probably not to the close of the period — c. A.D. 380 to 390 — the age of Symmachus and his friends. We miss in our writers not only any specific references, as, for example, to the statue of Victory in the senate-house, but also the wistfulness and the warmth of those last defenders of paganism. A central date — c. A.D. 350 to 360 — would naturally commend itself; and that this natural suggestion happens also to be correct is proved by the glorification of Claudius Gothicus as founder of the house of Constantius Chlorus and Constantine. The version of the story offered is not the original one, but a later version:[7] it can only have been addressed to Flavius Claudius, Constantius (Gallus), (Caesar A.D. 351–354) and his young half-brother Flavius Claudius Julianus (Caesar, A.D. 355–360 — Augustus 360–364). It is most tempting to follow Professor Norman Baynes[8] and associate the 'Historia' in one way or another, with Julian's 'apostasy,' his deliberate return to paganism; but it is only fair to observe that, in that case, one might have expected more open hostility to Christianity on the part of the writers than we actually find.

(4) There is, as everyone knows, a gap in the 'Historia,' as it survives, from Philip I to the early years of Valerian and Gallienus. Can it be mere accident that this gap covers the reigns of the first Emperor who definitely favored the Christians and two of the most savage persecutors? The reigns of Maximin Thrax and Aurelian could be narrated, perhaps, without reference to their persecutions — actual or planned. But could the same silence have been kept over Trajan Decius and Valerian? These questions might seem to be merely rhetorical, were it

[4] Sev. Alex. 49.6.

[5] Aurelian, 20.5.

[6] Firmus, etc. 8.

[7] Cf. Claudius 13.1–3: Constantius Chlorus was son of Claudia, who was daughter of Crispus, brother of Claudius. The earlier version made Constantius a son of Claudius.

[8] The 'Historia Augusta: Re date and purpose.' Cambridge, 1926.

not that the 'Historia' itself very definitely suggests an answer. Valerian is represented as a great and virtuous Emperor, Gallienus as a mean and spiritless poltroon: the same malign fate that deprived Rome of the one by captivity preserved the other to corrupt the state. The Christian version, of course, was that Valerian, the persecutor, fell because of his sins, and Gallienus who gave the Church peace, was saved because of his virtues. The 'Historia' gives it the lie direct. It is not much to assume, then, that hostility to Christianity was already betrayed in the lost lives of Philip I, Trajan Decius and their successors, and, if such hostility were written large in the narrative and not confined to a few phrases, it might actually be the reason why those lives were allowed to fall out of the series.

If this last suggestion is correct, if the 'Historia' originally contained passages, openly hostile and offensive to Christians, can we still say that it could not have belonged to the age of Diocletian and Constantine? I think so — though the argument would take rather a different form. We could no longer lay much stress on the lack of religious passion, but we could still insist that we miss the sense of immediate contact between the writers and the reigns of the Emperors, to whom they profess to address themselves. We could also emphasize the fact that the clearest indication of later date (in the references to Claudius Gothicus — see note 2) occurs in the same part of the work as the missing lines, the part assigned to 'Trebellius Pollio.'

The 'Historia' grows out of the ground, out of which Julian and his apostasy sprang — even if the glorification of Constantius Chlorus might seem to point rather to Constantius Gallus than to Julian himself. There is so much nonsense and mystification about this strange work that one has almost come to despair of seeing it shorn of uncertainty and speculation. But the last of the 'Scriptores' Flavius Vopiscus does drop a number of clues, which seem to point to a date near A.D. 350, and it really appears that for once he was not romancing.[9]

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[9] E.g. recent consulship of Furius Placidus (Aurelian, 15.4) perhaps to be identified with a consul of A.D. 343: Vopiscus's grandfather is represented as a contemporary of Diocletian (Carus, 14, etc.).